MUHAMMAD
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BY

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WITH TWO MAPS

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wtace.

PREFACE

THE idea of writing an exhaustive life of the Holy Founder of Islam has ever been present in my mind since I took up the work of translating the Holy Qurán into English about fifteen years ago, but I have not been able to give it a practical shape owing to various other engagements. The short sketch that is now being published is by no means a fulfilment of that idea. It is but a very brief and hurried account of a life which is full of the noblest lessons for humanity, and a bird's-eye view of the greatest transformation which has been wrought in the history of man. I do not know if I shall live long enough to attempt the more laborious work of presenting that ennobling story in all its details; for the present I offer this humble tribute to the memory of him who devoted his whole life to the best service of humanity.

I believe, as every Muslim does, that every nation had its superman, the luminary who gave it light, the reformer who inspired it with noble ideas, the prophet who raised it morally. But Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, is *par excellence* THE PROPHET, because he is the Prophet not of one nation but of all the nations of the world, because it was he who declared belief in all the prophets of the world as an essential of the faith he preached and thus laid down the basis of everlasting peace among different nations, because "he is the greatest of all reformers" (Bosworth

Smith), having brought about a transformation the equal of which has not been brought about either before or after him, and lastly because "he is the most successful of all prophets and religious personalities" (En. Br. *Art.* Koran). Every man ought to be judged by what he does, and Muhammad the Prophet accomplished within twenty years what centuries of the labours of Jewish and Christian reformers could not accomplish notwithstanding the temporal power at their back. He swept away centuries-old idolatry, superstition, credulity, ignorance, prostitution, gambling, drinking, oppression of the weak, internecine war and a hundred other evils from a whole country. History cannot show any other reformer who wrought so wonderful and complete a transformation on such a large scale within so short a time. Never "was reform more hopeless" than at the advent of the Prophet, as Muir has remarked, and never was it more complete than when he departed. In one word, "it was a birth from darkness into light" as Carlyle says. A life so great cannot be devoid of potentialities as great for the future; it cannot but inspire the noblest ideas of the service of humanity into any heart. If there is any one trait of his character which is more marked than another, it is his care of the orphan and the widow, his support of the weak and the helpless, his love of labour and work for the distressed. It is the life of a man who lived for God and who died for God. "If ever man on this earth found God, if ever man devoted his life to God's service with a good and great motive, it is certain that the Prophet of Arabia was that man" (Leonard).

The original work was written by me in Urdu, and the English rendering now being presented to the public

is the result of the labour of love of Maulvi Muhammad Yaqub Khan, at present Imam of the Mosque at Woking, who did this work in addition to his duties as a Muslim preacher at Woking. My sincerest thanks are due to him, as well as to Khawaja Kamal-ud-Din, head of the Woking Muslim Mission, who afforded every facility to M. Muhammad Yaqub Khan for completing the work. And I place the manuscript in the hands of Maulana Sadr-ud-Din, who is now propagating Islam in Germany, as I did in the case of the English Translation of the Holy Qurán, for getting the work through the press, for its revision, and correction of proofs.

Ahmadiyya Buildings, Lahore,
August 25, 1923. MUHAMMAD ALI.

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CHAPTER I

ARABIA AND THE ARABS

> "Most surely the first house appointed for men is the one at Bekka, blessed and a guidance for the Nations." (The Holy Qurán, III, 95.)

THE land known as *Jazirat-ul-'Arab,* or the Arabian Island, occupies a central position in the hemisphere comprising the continents of Asia, Africa and Europe. It forms the heart, so to speak, of the Old World. This is the country that gave birth to Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him, the last of the great religious reformers who founded a religion. The Indian Ocean washes its coast on the south, the Mediterranean and the Red Sea on the west. To the east lie the Persian Gulf, the Tigris and the Euphrates, the latter two traversing its northern part as well. Thus on almost all the four sides, it is bounded by seas and rivers, and for this reason historians and geographers have treated it, not as a peninsula but, as an island comprising within its boundaries the strip of land known as Mesopotamia as well as Arabian Syria. The modern map of the world, however, does not show these as forming an integral part of the island, and excluding them, Arabia extends over an area of twelve hundred thousand square miles. About a third of this is covered by sandy deserts, the biggest being the one known as *Ad-Dahna,* lying in the middle of the southern part. There are practically no rivers worth the name in the country. Small streams,

however, are met with here and there. Some of these lose themselves in the sands of the desert, while others wind their way up to the sea. Right across the country runs a chain of mountains, from south to north, known as *Jabal-us-Sarat,* the highest peak being eight thousand feet. Dates are the main produce. In ancient days, Arabia was famous for its gold, silver, precious stones and spices. Of the animals found here, the camel is the most valuable and useful, while the arab has no match in the world for beauty, speed, and mettle.

As a matter of fact, Mesopotamia and Arabian Syria form part and parcel of the island of Arabia, though modern political distribution shows them as distinct from the mainland. Of these, Mesopotamia stretches adjacent to Persia. The towns of Basra and Kufa, which long remained the centres of Islamic learning, were founded here during the caliphate of 'Umar the Great. Arabian Syria lies in the north, extending right up to Aleppo. The Arab geographers have, therefore, shown the Euphrates as the northern boundary of the island. In this part lies the Mount Sinai where Moses received Divine revelation. The Amalekites once had a mighty kingdom here.

Arabia proper is sub-divided into a number of parts. Of these Hedjaz is the province, in which the sacred land of *Haram* is situated. The *Haram* (forbidden or sacred territory) is so called because from time immemorial the place has been held in the highest veneration, and every kind of warfare is strictly forbidden there. It is within the precincts of this *Haram* that stands the sacred house of Ka'ba. The Torah, the sacred book of the Jews, speaks of Hedjaz by the name of Paran. Its chief towns are Mecca, Medina and Táif. This province extends

along the Red Sea in a rectangular strip. Jedda and Yenbo are its two main sea-ports, where pilgrims for Mecca and Medina respectively land. On the east, Hedjaz is bounded by the province of Najd and on the south, by 'Asir, a part of Yaman.

The second main province is Yaman which lies in the south of the island. Hazramaut and Ahqaf form parts of this province. It is the most fertile tract in the whole of Arabia and has consequently been the most civilized. Even to-day some of the relics of magnificent buildings are met with here. Huge embankments were once constructed here to control the springs of water from the mountains and utilize them for irrigation purposes. The most famous of these is Marib, the destruction of which has also been mentioned in the Holy Qurán.[1] Yaman was moreover the centre of trade in minerals, precious stones and spices, for which Arabia was once so famous. The mighty empire of the 'Ad, of which the Holy Qurán speaks, was established here.[2] This particular area is known as Ahqaf. Hazramaut is the part of Yaman which lies in the extreme south, along the shore of the Indian Ocean. San'a is the capital of this province and Aden its chief port. To the north of San'a lies Najran, where Christianity spread before the advent of Islam. The well-known Christian delegation that waited upon the Holy Prophet, and which was allowed to put up in the Prophet's Mosque, came from this place. To the north of Najran lies 'Asir.

The third great part of Arabia is Najd which extends from *Jabal-us-Sarat* eastward, across the interior of the country. It is a rich and fertile plateau, some three or

[1] 24:16. [2] 7:65.

four thousand feet above sea-level. Here lived the clan of Ghatafan, for whose chastisement the Holy Prophet had once to lead an expedition. The desert bounds it on three sides, while in its south lies Yamama. The Banu Hanifa, of which tribe came Musailma, the impostor, lived here.

In the south-east of Arabia, and along the coast of the gulf of Oman, stretches the tract of land known as 'Umman. Its capital is Masqat, where a separate, though nominal, Sultan has now been set up. To the north of 'Umman lies the part known as Bahrain, also called Al-Ahsa, famous for its pearls. Close by, is *Hira,* once a kingdom.

Hijr, the home of the Samood among whom Salih was raised as a prophet, is another place of note. It lies to the north of Medina. On his march against Tabuk, the Holy Prophet happened to pass by this place. Tabuk and Hijr are now two stations on the Hedjaz Railway. To the west of Hijr lies Madyan, the place of the prophet Shu'aib. To the north of Medina is Khaibar, once the stronghold of the Jews.

The three chief towns of Hedjaz, as previously mentioned, are Mecca, Medina and Táif. Táif owes its fame to the fact that, situated as it is at the foot of the mountains, it is cool and rich in verdure, with innumerable springs of water and abundance of fruits. It lies to the east of Mecca and is the general summer resort of the Hedjaz nobility. But the most famous towns of Hedjaz are Mecca and Medina. Mecca or Becca is also known as *Umm-ul-Qura* or the Mother of towns. On all the four sides it is enclosed by mountains. Its present population numbers fifty thousand. From days of hoary antiquity it has been the spiritual and religious capital of Arabia, for here stands the sacred house of God known

as Ka'ba, which has been the resort of pilgrims from every nook and corner of Arabia from pre-historic days. Sir William Muir thus comments on the antiquity of the House in his "Life of Muhammad":

"A very high antiquity must be assigned to the main features of the religion of Mecca. . . . Diodorus Siculus, writing about half a century before our era, says of that part of Arabia washed by the Red Sea 'there is in this country a temple greatly revered by all the Arabs.' These words must refer to the holy house of Mecca, for we know of no other which ever commanded the universal homage of Arabia. . . . Tradition represents the Ka'ba as from time immemorial the scene of pilgrimage from *all* quarters of Arabia:—from Yemen, Hadramaut, and the shores of the Persian Gulf, from the desert of Syria, and from the distant environs of Hira and Mesopotamia, men yearly flocked to Mecca. So extensive a homage must have had its beginning in an extremely remote age."

To establish the antiquity of the Ka'ba, Sir William has drawn upon historical facts and oral traditions. The Qurán too points to the same conclusion. It speaks of the Ka'ba as the first house "built for men,"[1] in other words the first house on the face of the earth assigned for the worship of God. The rays of Divine revelation emanated first of all from this place. And what a remarkable coincidence! This same place enjoys the distinction of giving birth to the last of the blessed prophets. Mecca owes its veneration to this house. In days as early as 2500 years B. C., it was a halting station for caravans plying between Yaman and Syria. The Holy Qurán also confirms that the sacred house was existent before Abraham.[2] When leaving his son, Ishmael, there, these are the words of prayer the great patriarch addressed to God: "O Lord! I have made

[1] 3 : 95. [2] 2 : 125.

some of my offspring settle in this barren valley, near Thy Sacred House".[1] This shows that the Ka'ba was there even at such a remote date.

Medina was originally called Yasrib. Later on when it was adopted by the Holy Prophet as his residence, it came to be known as Madinat-un-Nabi, or the Prophet's town, which was gradually contracted into Al-Medina, the Town, and ultimately into mere Medina. This is also an ancient town. Certain historical clues suggest its foundation to date as early as 1600 B. C. It was first inhabited by the Amalekites, subsequently by the Jews, the 'Aus and the Khazraj. When the Prophet came to settle here, these three people formed the population of the town. The latter two subsequently won the epithet of *Ansār* or the Helpers. In the thirteenth year of his mission, the Holy Prophet emigrated from Mecca to Medina, where he spent the remaining days of his life. Here it was that he breathed his last, and here stands his tomb to this day. Medina lies 270 miles to the north of Mecca, and unlike the latter, is not quite barren. Besides luxuriant cultivation it has an abundance of fruitbearing trees to boast of. In the winter it is comparatively cooler than Mecca.

The 'Ad, the Samood, Tasm and Jadis are the most ancient races of Arabia, as far as can be traced, the first two having been spoken of in the Holy Qurán. These aboriginal races are known as the *Baida*, or ancient Arabs. The destruction of the tribe of Noah was followed by the rise of the 'Ad whose settlements spread far and wide beyond the limits of Arabia. Historical evidence bears out their domination over Arabia, Egypt and many other places. At the fall of this race, the Samood rose in power.

[1] 14 : 37.

Then came the rise of the Banu Qahtan, whose homeland was Yaman. In their day, they too attained to great power and ascendancy. The Aus and the Khazraj were the off-shoots of this tribe. All these races are known as the *'Ariba,* or pure Arabs.

Last of all came Ishmael whose progeny goes by the name of the Musta'riba, or naturalized Arabs. In obedience to Divine behest he was left by his father, Abraham, along with his mother Hajira, at the place where stands the Ka'ba.[1] There is little truth in the belief that they were banished by Abraham at the instance of his second wife, Sarah. The idea is emphatically refuted in a report from the Holy Prophet which says that on Hajira's question whether Abraham was leaving them there in obedience to Divine will, the Patriarch replied in the affirmative. Their account in the Qurán too leads to the same conclusion. Later on, the father and the son reconstructed, at Divine injunction, the Sacred House of Ka'ba, which, it seems, was in a dilapidated condition.[2] This done, both conjointly addressed the Almighty with the prayer, which the Qurán reports in these words, "O our Lord! raise among them a Prophet from among themselves," which found fulfilment in the person of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be with him.[3] For this reason the Holy Prophet is also called the "prayer of Abraham." Ishmael's progeny multiplied and ramified into numerous tribes. One of these is known as the Quraish, which is descended from Nadr. This tribe was later sub-divided into a number of clans, the Prophet being a scion of one of these known as Banu Hashim.

[1] 14:37; 2:125. [2] 2:127. [3] 2:129.

CHAPTER II

THE DARK AGE

"Corruption appeared on land and sea."
(The Holy Qurán, xxx, 41.)

THE period preceding the advent of the Prophet has been designated the Dark Age by the Qurán which epitomizes in two words what would take volumes to dilate upon.[1] The picture drawn in the above verse portrays the fallen state of the Arab idolaters, the Jews and the Christians alike. Nay, it avers that corruption was rampant throughout the world. This does not, however, imply that the world had never before witnessed a better state of things; but whatever of civilization and of moral life had ever sprung up anywhere through the various prophets raised from time to time, among different peoples, had by this time utterly disappeared in consequence of the lapse of long ages. Every nation of the world was at the time far removed from the state of real civilization. These words found utterance through the mouth of one who was, no doubt, quite illiterate. He had had no opportunity of going round the world to study the condition of different countries; nor had he the benefit of the publicity system of the day that might have acquainted him with the state of the world at that time. Nevertheless, a reference to the pages of history corroborates the truth of the assertion in a striking manner. Barring the fact that Europe had a mighty Empire towards its south-east—the Christian Empire of Rome—

[1] 30 : 41.

it was sunk deep in a state of barbarity in the literal sense of the word. Asia, of all the continents of the world, had once been the nursery of civilization. But a study of the various countries of this cradle of philosophies and religions shows, that, here as elsewhere, rank immorality was the order of the day. India, once the centre of the ancient Eastern culture, presented the same horrid picture. Foul, base and heinous things were attributed even to what the people regarded as their demi-gods. Evil had taken so great a hold on them, that even the virtuous were painted in dark colours. Persia and China too, were in the same plight. This probably was due to the fact that centuries had elapsed since the advent of the last holy and virtuous persons, and whatever reformation and civilization had been previously established became gradually weakened and finally obliterated. The Holy Qurán says: "Time became prolonged to them so their hearts hardened".[1]

Jesus was the prophet most proximate to the Holy Prophet Muhammad in point of time. One would naturally expect in the Christian religion, if anywhere at all, some relics of virtue and morality. But what was the state of Christianity at the time? Let us have the evidence of the Christian writers themselves on the point. Drawing a picture of those days, a bishop says that the Heavenly kingdom was utterly upset, nay a state of veritable hell had been established on the earth, in consequence of inner corruption. Sir William Muir writes almost to the same effect: "Moreover, the Christianity of the seventh century was itself decrepit and corrupt. It was disabled by contending schisms, and had substituted the puerili-

[1] 57:16.

ties of superstition for the pure and expansive faith of the early ages."

This is a picture of Christianity concerning its general state. Unity of Godhead had disappeared long since. The Doctrine of Trinity had given rise to numerous complications. Diverse schisms and sects vied with one another in the exercise of their brains in the disentanglement of the riddle how man became God or how three make one and *vice versa*. This led to the production of heaps of polemic works, removing man far off from the true purpose of religion. Gibbon commenting on the event of the famous library at Alexandria, being set on fire by the intolerant Christians, makes a significant observation in this connection: "But if the ponderous mass of Arian and Monophysite controversy was indeed consumed in the public baths, a philosopher may allow, with a smile, that it was ultimately devoted to the benefit of mankind." The general evils of Christianity, drinking, gambling and adultery, were in full swing even in those days. Dozy quotes the Caliph 'Ali as speaking of the Taghlib, a Christian tribe in the following significant words: "All they have borrowed from that Church is the practice of wine-bibbing." In short, Christianity which was the last of the revealed religions of the world was practically defunct. It had lost all driving force to bring about moral reformation. Besides, the fallen state of the human society at large, all over the world, also bears testimony to the truth of the Qurânic assertion.[1]

And what about Arabia itself? It is true that Arab poetry was at its zenith, and pre-Islamic poetry displays a high degree of ability and skill. It is also true that

[1] 30 : 41.

writing was not unknown to the Arabs, but they seldom turned it to any use. Even their poetry was not preserved in black and white. Poetical compositions of the Dark Age have one and all come down through oral traditions with the solitary exception of the pieces known as the *"Mu'allaqat"* which were committed to paper and suspended on the walls of the Ka'ba. As regards the fact that the Arabs had developed the art of poetry, suffice it to say that mere poetry, as such, affords no sure criterion of a people's stage of civilization. Interest in poetry is observed in almost every society, however crude and primitive. And the reason is not far to seek. The people at this stage have very few objects of interest, which multiply only with the growth of civilization, and hence their sole devotion to the only available form of fine art—poetry. But even Arab poetry is devoid of the breadth of vision and loftiness of thought which come only with culture. Beauty of language is all it can boast of. There were, no doubt, certain noble traits in the Arab character. Hospitality, love of freedom, daring, manliness, tribal fidelity and generosity were some of the qualities in which the Arab had no equal. But a few virtues, by themselves, especially when overbalanced by the height of barbarity and brutality can hardly be taken to constitute civilization. Side by side with the most hospitable treatment accorded to a guest, it was a common practice to rob a wayfarer. The sentiment of tribal patriotism, though highly commendable in itself, had also been carried to excess and abused. Trifling disputes between individuals would lead to terrible conflagrations of war and blood-feuds extending from generation to generation. In fine, the entire world-horizon was at this

period overcast with the darkest clouds of irreligion and immorality. Virtue of a high order was absolutely unknown.

No doubt the Arabs professed faith in the unity of God, but it was too shallow. Their practical life belied their lip-profession. They were given to idolatry, thinking that Almighty God had entrusted the discharge of the various functions of the universe to different gods, goddesses and idols. They would therefore turn to these, invoking their blessings in all sorts of undertakings. Thus their belief in the unity of God was an empty dogma, finding no place in the system of their practical life. Besides idols, they looked upon the air, the sun, the moon, and the stars as the controllers of their destinies, and worshipped them as such. Nay, they had stooped so low as to worship pieces of stones, trees and sand-heaps. They would fall down prostrate before any good-looking piece of stone they might come across. Should they fail to find out a piece of stone, they would worship a sand-hill, after having milked their she-camel thereon. They looked upon angels as the daughters of God. Even men of fame were worshipped, images being carved out after their names. It was not necessary to have the stones properly carved or shaped. Even rough unhewn ones served the purpose. Going out on a journey they would carry four stones along with them, three to make a hearth, and the fourth to serve for an object of worship. Sometimes no separate one for worship purposes would be carried. The cooking done, any of the three would be pulled out and worshipped. Over and above the three hundred and sixty idols set up in the Ka'ba, every tribe had an idol of its own. Nay, one was kept in each and every household. Idol-worship had,

in short, become a second nature with them which influenced their everyday life in all its details. The central idea of their faith was that God had made over the control and administration of this system of the universe to others, in whom He had vested all power, such as healing the sick, granting children, removing famine and epidemic. Divine favour could not be obtained but through the intercession of these idols. They would prostrate before them, circumambulate around them, offer sacrifices to them, and set apart some of the produce of their fields and their animals as an offering to them. Out of such a debasing idolatry, the Holy Prophet Muhammad uplifted the whole of Arabia in the brief span of but two decades. Not merely was idolatry eradicated root and branch from the soil of Arabia, but over and above, such a spark of enthusiasm for the unity of God was kindled in the hearts of the self-same Arabs, that it carried them far and wide over the length and breadth of the then known world to uphold the name of One God. The weaning of a whole country extending over a vast area of twelve hundred thousand square miles from the curse of idol-worship to which it was hopelessly wedded by long established traditions and heredity, in no more time than a fifth of a century, so as to win it the proud title of the iconoclast—is it not the mightiest miracle that the world has ever witnessed? Does not the personality who wrought the transformation richly deserve the title of the best of Mankind?

In addition to idol-worship, which was the order of the day, star-worship had taken no less firm root in the soil of Arabia. Human destiny was associated with the movements of the various stars. Phenomena of nature

appertaining to man's good or evil were attributed to their influence. There were also those who either had no religion or were downright atheists.

Whereas on the one hand the worst form of idolatry had a firm hold on the Arab mind in general, there were also some who had no faith in the existence of God, the immortality of the human soul and the day of retribution. To them religion was all mockery. They would hold up to ridicule the very idols they professed to adore. It is said of the famous poet, Imra-ul-Qais, that on the murder of his father, he consulted an oracle in accordance with the traditional practice among the Arabs, to divine whether or not he should avenge the murder. The process consisted in marking two arrows, one with the word *na'am* (yes), the other with *la* (no), to indicate respectively whether the undertaking should be entered upon or not. A blank one was also put in, which, if drawn, advised the lot to be drawn afresh. Imra-ul-Qais drew the arrows three times and each time the negative one came out. In a fit of rage he flung the arrow in the face of the idol saying "O wretch! had it been the murder of thy own father, thou wouldst not have forbidden me to avenge it."

Such was the state of irreligion and idol-worship in Arabia. As regards their social life, they presented no better picture. In this respect too, they were utterly ignorant of the very alpha and beta of social principles. Their mode of life made it impossible to evolve any social virtues. Internecine feuds engaged the whole of their attention. A settled and peaceful mode of life, which is indispensable for the cultivation of social qualities, was unknown to them. What loomed large in their mind

every moment was the prospect of hostilities that might any time break out with another clan. They led a nomadic mode of life, wandering with their cattle from place to place. They would set up their tents of camel-skins, wherever they found water to drink and forage for their cattle. A very small minority of them had settled in villages and still fewer in towns. How was it possible, under such circumstances, that the blessings of an ordered and settled society should have accrued to them? Then there was no central government to enforce law and order. The whole country was rent into innumerable petty states, each clan forming a separate independent political unit. The few provincial governments that existed here and there were too weak to enforce justice. To wrench one's right from another, one had to depend upon one's strength of arm. Each tribe had a chief of its own who would lead them in battle against a hostile tribe, to vindicate their rights. But there was no law whatsoever, binding the individual to the tribe or the tribe to the nation. Each was independent, owing no allegiance to any central authority. Islam came with its unifying force, as is admitted by Muir:

"The first peculiarity, then, which attracts our attention is the sub-division of the Arabs into innumerable bodies, governed by the same code of honour and morals, and exhibiting the same manners, speaking for the most part the same language, but each independent of the others; restless and often at war amongst themselves; and even where united by blood or by interest, ever ready on some insignificant cause to separate and give way to an implacable hostility. Thus at the era of Islam the retrospect of Arabian history exhibits, as in the kaleidoscope, an ever-varying state of combination and repulsion, such as had hitherto rendered abortive any attempt at a general union . . . The problem had yet to be solved, by

what force these tribes could be subdued, or drawn to one common centre; and it was solved by Muhammad."

The Holy Qurán has so pithily summed up this all-round deterioration in a single sentence: "You (the Arabs) were on the verge of a fiery abyss."[1] Hostilities once breaking would continue for generations. Trifles, such as a word of contempt, or a slight mischief in a horse-race, would lead to the slaughter of thousands. And the worst of it was, that the vanquished and the captives in these warfares were reduced to a state of eternal bondage to the victors. It was such a fallen humanity that the Prophet uplifted to an enviable plane of moral life. He welded the discordant elements into one harmonious brotherhood which stands unique in the history of the world.[2] A mighty transformation!

Woman occupied a low position in the Arab society. Barring the love-songs in praise of the beloved, which were the outcome of carnal lust, woman was accorded no better treatment than lower animals. Polyandry which is characteristic of a very primitive stage of human society was also in vogue among them. Besides, there was no limit to the number of wives a man could take. It depended all upon his own sweet will. Over and above plurality of wives, he could have illicit intercourse with any number of sweethearts. Prostitution was rife among them as a profession. Captive women, kept as hand-maids, were forced to make money for their masters in this mean manner. Married women were allowed by their husbands to conjugate with others for the sake of offspring. The practice was called *"Istibza,"* and it is similar to the practice of Niyoga still prevalent among

[1] 3 : 102. [2] 3 : 102.

the Hindus. Moreover, woman was looked upon as mere chattel. She was entitled to no share of the legacy of her deceased husband, father or other relations. Nay, she was herself inherited as part and parcel of the property of the deceased. The heir was at liberty to dispose of her as he would. He could marry her himself, or give her in marriage to anybody he chose. On the death of his father, a son would even marry his stepmother, she being a part of the inheritance. The practice of divorce in vogue among them was no less barbarous. A thousand times could a man divorce his wife and take her back within a prescribed period known as *'iddat*. Sometimes he would swear he would not go near her, sometimes he would announce that he would look upon her as his mother, thus leaving her in a state of neither being married nor divorced,—a state of suspension. These methods were adopted simply to tease her. And she, poor creature, had no way out of the pitiable plight. The worst type of obscene language was used in expressing sex-relations. Stories of love and illicit intercourse were as shamelessly narrated as proudly in verses of the most indecent kind. Women of high families were openly addressed in love-songs. Considering the state of things obtaining among the Arabs with regard to the status of woman, it is not difficult to judge what a heavy debt of obligation womanhood owes to Muhammad, may peace be on him, who, picking her up from the depth of lowliness, raised her to a position of dignity. Even the modern European civilization which has but a superficial respect for the gentle sex, fails to grant those rights to women. Her genuine respect lies in the due recognition of her chas-

tity and the perfect equality of her rights with man, which is, unfortunately, nowhere met with in Western culture.

As a contrast, let us turn to the amelioration wrought in the state of woman by Islam. The Qurânic injunction "Women shall have the same rights over men as men have over them," was the Magna Charta, so to speak, of woman's franchise.[1] In the same strain observed the Holy Prophet: "The best of you is he who treats his wife best." Such was the change effected in the whole atmosphere, saturated with contempt for womanhood. To implant veneration for woman in a soil where it was regarded a mark of nobility to burn alive a female offspring, is surely no mean service to humanity. On hearing of the birth of a daughter, the father's face would turn black with deep grief and anxiety. He had either to bury her alive, or to put up with social disgrace.[2] He would thus take his daughter to the desert, make her stand on the verge of the pit dug there beforehand, and hurling the screaming child down with his own hands, bury her alive underneath a heap of earth. The Holy Prophet when once informed of one such incident burst into tears of pity. Sometimes an explicit agreement was made at the nuptial ceremony that female offspring was to be killed. It was, in this case, the duty of the mother herself to commit the barbarity. Poor creature! She had to do it in the presence of all the female members of the family, especially invited to attend the grim function. All these cold-blooded brutalities were put an end to, at a single stroke by the Qurânic words: "And when the one buried alive is asked for what offence she was killed."[3] Never thereafter was

[1] 2 : 228. [2] 16 : 58-59. [3] 81 : 8.

the tragic cruelty repeated, not even in a single instance. In this respect, Muhammad, peace be upon him, stands unrivalled in the history of the world, for his service to mankind.

Drinking was another vice to which the whole of Arabia was hopelessly wedded. Intoxicating liquors were taken several times daily. There was not a household, but had quite a number of wine pitchers in store. But no sooner was the Qurânic prohibition proclaimed than the very pots were broken to pieces, and thrown out[1]. It is related that wine flowed like rain-water in the streets of Medina. Centuries-old habit of drinking was thus shaken off in no time, and strict teetotalism became the order of the day.

Gambling was another curse having a firm hold on the Arab society. It was indulged in as a common daily pastime. Those who abstained were looked down upon as miserly. Muhammad's spiritual force made short work of this as well, and releaved Arabia of the long standing evil.

There was no education worth the name among the Arabs. Those able to decipher a script could be counted on fingers. Ignorance bred superstition, and they were given to all sorts of queer beliefs. They had faith in the existence of genii and evil spirits, whom they would conjure up in solitary places. To these they also attributed certain kinds of diseases, to escape which they would make use of charms and incantations. They held the human soul to be a tiny creature which entered the body at man's birth and went on growing. At his death it left the corporeal frame and kept hovering over the

[1] 5 : 90.

tomb. In time of drought, they would fasten dry blades of grass and underwood to a cow's tail and set fire thereto and drive the animal to the mountains. They thought the flame of fire resembled a flash of lightning and would, by reason of similarity, attract rainfall. In case a calamity befell them, they would enter the house by the backdoor. From the flight of birds they took good or evil omens. If a bird crossed their way from the left to the right, it was regarded as a good omen, and *vice versa.* Those who believed in a life after death would tie a camel at a tomb and starve it to death, thinking the deceased would mount on its back on the day of resurrection. They also believed that the soul of man assumed the form of an owl at his death, and kept hovering over his tomb. In the case of the slain, the owl would thus keep droning "Give me water, Give me water," until the murder had been avenged. They believed in sooth-sayers and fortune-tellers, and had implicit faith in whatever they told them. In short, these and a hundred and one other superstitions were believed by the Arabs of the pre-Islamic days of ignorance. In the course of a few years Muhammad, peace be on him, emancipated him from all these shackles of hereditary bondage, and elevated him to the pinnacle of morality, learning and civilization. History will vainly turn its pages to point to a parallel of the wholesale reformation and edification of a fallen people such as the Arabs were. Does not the mighty achievement entitle the great Reformer Muhammad to the proud epithet of the best of Mankind?

CHAPTER III

WAVES OF REFORMATION IN ARABIA

> "That you may warn a people whose fathers were not warned, so they are heedless."
>
> (The Holy Qurán, XXXVI, 6.)

PROPHETS were raised in various parts of Arabia before the dispensation of the patriarch Abraham, as well as after. Reference to some of these has also been made in the Holy Qurán. Hud was deputed for the reformation of the tribe of the 'Ad, that settled in a part of Yaman known as Ahqaf, and Salih was raised for the Samood, inhabiting the part called Hijr, to the north of Medina. Both these reformers preceded Abraham; while two others, Ishmael and Shu'aib, raised in Yaman and Madyan respectively, came after him. Traditions as well as inscriptions show that the 'Ad were a very mighty people. They had founded a great empire which extended to far off places outside Arabia. It seems that prophets had been raised among them even before the advent of Hud, who made his appearance at a time when the nation was sunk to the lowest depth of worldliness. They turned a deaf ear to this prophet and were severely punished. Their destruction was wrought by the dust-storm from the desert, which lies to the north of Ahqaf and goes by the name of the *Rub'-i Khali* or the Barren Quarter. The Samood, therefore, betook themselves to the mountains, carving their homes out of the rocks.[1] But when their doom was sealed, strongholds could not

[1] 26 : 149.

save them. They perished with an earthquake. A look at the map of Arabia will show that of these four, the mission of Hud and Ishmael was confined to the south, while that of Salih and Shu'aib, to the north of Arabia; the middle portion, known as Hedjaz, remained without a prophet. But Abraham's visiting Mecca and his leaving Ishmael there, and afterwards his building the Ka'ba, have preserved to this day the association of Abraham's name with certain places here.

During the dispensation of the Israelite prophets, idol-worship had reached its highest pitch in Arabia. A queen of Yaman was converted to the doctrine of the unity of Godhead by Solomon. This was followed by another feeble ripple on the religious deep of Arabia. The Jews migrated and settled there, probably about the 5th century B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar drove them out of their homelands. Prophecies as to the appearance of the Last Prophet from the soil of Arabia were also current among them. Therefore they took up their abode there, and Khaibar thus became a purely Jewish settlement. When they gained a firm footing here, they began propagating their faith. About the 3rd century B.C., the king of Yaman, Zu-Nawas by name, embraced Judaism. This added fresh momentum to the Jewish movement of proselytism and in the course of time Judaism won considerable ascendancy in the island. But the Arab nation as a whole remained addicted to its ancestral religion of idol-worship, and after a short-lived career, the Jewish religious movement died a natural death, leaving the Arabians as they were. This was followed by another wave of reformation. Christian missionaries began pouring into Arabia in the 3rd cen-

tury A.D. and settled in Najran. Their proselytizing activities were supplemented a good deal by the temporal influence of the two Christian powers in the neighbourhood of Arabia, the Abyssinian to the West and the Roman Empire to the North. Consequently the entire province of Najran which lies between 'Asir and San'a accepted Christianity. But beyond this Christianity could make no headway. Barring just a bare sprinkling of converts here and there, little impress was made by Christianity on Arabia proper. Thus ended in utter failure, this second attempt at the reformation of the island.

The third reformatory wave set in motion, was internal. Just a little before the advent of Islam, a new school of thought known as "Hanif" sprang up. This small band discarded idolatry, but was no better disposed towards Judaism or Christianity. They worshipped only one God. Nor did they at all bother themselves about reformation in the social life of their country. Feeling aversion for idol-worship, some of these did no doubt join the fold of Christianity, such as Waraqa-bin-Naufal, Khadija's cousin, and Abdullah-bin-Jahsh, Hamza's nephew, but their number was insignificant. A vast majority of them found no satisfaction in Christianity nor in Judaism. Of these the noteworthy were Zaid bin 'Amru-bin-Nufail, 'Umar's uncle, and Umayya, a renowned poet and the chief of Táif. These people had little zeal for promulgating their newly conceived notions. Nevertheless they made no secret of their abhorrence of idolatry, and openly avowed Unitarianism as their faith, which they professed to be the religion taught by Abraham. Feeble though the movement wasit, was

undoubtedly there. It took no note of the social evils of Arabia. Mere profession of the unity of God in place of idol-worship was its end-all and be-all. But like its predecessors, this internal movement also failed to penetrate beyond the surface, leaving the Arab society as unaffected as ever. In fact, it was far more feeble than either the Jewish or the Christian movement.

It is remarkable that just before the appearance of the Holy Prophet, three different movements were set afoot, all aiming at the reformation of Arabia. Keeping at work for centuries with all the advantages that wordly power can afford, all these movements vanish in smoke. But then arises an individual, all single-handed and in a state of utter helplessness, and achieves phenomenal success in his mission. In the course of a few years, he brings about a transformation unparalleled in the history of the world. Not only is the base religion of the country—idolatry—eradicated, but the entire social fabric reclaimed, and released from long-standing and deep-rooted corruption.

The Jews had family affinity with the Arabs. Both came of the same stock. Their language, their manners, their customs had much in common. Both held the great Patriarch Abraham in high esteem. The King of Yaman, a most fertile province of Arabia, had accepted the Jewish religion. Thus to all human calculations, these various forces in favour of Judaism, had a cumulative effect potent enough to secure the conversion of the whole of Arabia. But Arabia proved adamantine to all these external influences. Then came Christianity with quite a new message. Its so-called Unitarianism resembled the Arab conception of Godhead. The idolatry

obtaining among the Arabs was akin to the sort of Greek idol-worship under the influence of which the Christian doctrine of Trinity had taken birth. St. Paul, the real founder of the Church religion as we have it, had given such an idolatrous look to the unity-doctrine of the Israelite prophets, as to make it fascinating for the idolatrous nations of his day. Consequently Christianity secured large numbers of converts from among these people. Over and above this, Christianity had another feature particularly attractive to the Arabs. It dispensed with the necessity of observing the law—a license quite in keeping with the Arab mode of life. Having no religious or temporal code of laws to regulate their conduct, these wild children of the desert had given themselves up to unbridled debauchery. Christianity allowed ample latitude for the gratification of their licentious propensities. It was therefore a creed offering the least line of resistance, and hence the easiest for them to adopt. In addition to these inherent attractions, Christianity had the advantage of temporal power to commend it to the Arabs. The Great Roman Empire to the north, the Abyssinian kingdom to the west, the conversion of one of the provinces of Yaman and the hold acquired by Christianity over the states of Hira and Ghassan—these were the manifold influences in favour of Christianity. Under such circumstances the conversion of the whole of the island seemed but a matter of days. Nevertheless, the Church failed to leave any appreciable mark on the Arab society, except that it gave a fresh impetus to drinking, gambling and sex-indulgence. The third movement, the "Hanifism," was purely internal in origin and had little to do with the

social reformation of Arabia, confining its aims and objects to one single item—the supplanting of idolatry by unitarianism. But notwithstanding such an unambitious programme, it found the soil of Arabia far less congenial than had the preceding movements. It proved the weakest of all, perhaps for the reason that it had no worldly power at its back. In view of all this, a critical eye cannot fail to perceive that behind the scenes, it was the mighty hand of the Lord, that helped the Holy Prophet Muhammad in working such a radical transformation in the religious, social and moral life of Arabia, within the brief space of barely two decades—a transformation that stands unique in the history of the world. Sir William Muir, by no means a friendly critic of the Prophet, has to admit this miraculous regeneration of Arabia, in the following words:

"During the youth of Mahomet, the aspect of the peninsula was strongly conservative; perhaps reform never was at any period more hopeless. Causes are sometimes conjured up to account for results produced by an agent apparently inadequate to effect them. Mahomet arose, and forthwith the Arabs were aroused to a new and a spiritual faith. Hence the conclusion that Arabia was fermenting for the change, and prepared to adopt it. To us, calmly reviewing the past, pre-Islamite history belies the assumption. After five centuries of Christian evangelization, we can point to but a sprinkling here and there of Christian converts."

"In fine, viewed thus in a religious aspect, the surface of Arabia had been now and then gently rippled by the feeble efforts of Christianity; the sterner influence of Judaism had been occasionally visible in a deeper and more troubled current; but the tide of indigenous idolatry and of Ishmaelite superstition, setting strongly from every quarter towards the Ka'ba, gave ample evidence that the faith and worship of

Mecca held the Arab mind in a rigorous and undisputed thraldom."

Further on he observes:

"The prospects of Arabia before the rise of Mahomet were as unfavourable to religious reform as to political union or national regeneration. The foundation of the Arab faith was a deep-rooted idolatry, which for centuries had stood proof, with no palpable symptom of decay, against every attempt at evangelization from Egypt and Syria."

Thus the Prophet Muhammad was raised as a warner to a people who were warning-proof, so to speak. They had baffled all previous attempts at their regeneration. But phenomenal success attended his labours in bringing about the revival of the self-same incorrigible race. Is this not a historical testimony to the belief that however fallen a nation, the Holy Prophet Muhammad's teachings are able to bring about its vivification?

CHAPTER IV

PROPHECIES ABOUT THE ADVENT OF THE HOLY PROPHET

> "Those who follow the Apostle-Prophet the *ummi* whom they find written down with them in the Torah and the Gospel."
>
> (The Holy Qurán, VII, 157.)

PROPHECIES as to the advent of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, were met with in the previous sacred books and had great currency among the nations. In fact those very prophecies might have impelled the Jews and the Christians to settle down in Arabia; for the land of the Promised Prophet was also distinctly specified by name in the Scriptures. We would briefly touch upon just a few of these.

The Qurán asserts that the appearance of the Holy Prophet was foretold by each and all of the foregoing prophets, through whom the covenant was also taken by their respective nations, that they would accept him with open arms. The distinguishing feature of the Promised One, they were told, was that he would bear testimony to the truth of all the prophets of the world.[1] Again, the Qurán claims that all previous scriptures contain prophecies as to the Prophet's advent.[2] These assertions of the Qurán are amply corroborated by a similar account in the pages of the New Testament (Acts 3 : 21). It seems that Providence deemed it fit to depute a separate prophet for the reformation of each

[1] 3 : 80. [2] 26 : 196.

nation, in the days of yore, when the various peoples inhabiting this planet were in absolute isolation from one another and modern facilities of communication had not come into being. Then to amalgamate the diverse religious systems into one, all-comprehensive, as well as to weld humanity into one Universal Brotherhood, he raised a Prophet with a mission for the whole of mankind. Thus while on the one hand the happy news of such a World-Prophet was given to each preceding prophet, the Promised Prophet was, on the other, commissioned to testify to the truth of all the foregoing prophets, wherever and whenever raised, all the world over. And the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, is the one prophet who answers to this description. He laid it down as one of the cardinal doctrines of faith that all the other prophets of the world should be accepted along with him. At the very opening of the Qurán we have it enjoined: "And those who believe in that which has been revealed to thee, and that which was revealed before thee."[1] Then as regards the raising of a reformer among every nation, it makes a general statement: "There has not been a nation but it had a warner."[2] On another occasion it says that it makes mention of some of the prophets while there are others who have not been expressly spoken of. So the Holy Prophet Muhammad stands out unique from both these view-points. On the one hand, the predictions of all his predecessors find due fulfilment in his person, while, on the other hand, he alone out of all the prophets, has made it a binding article of faith to believe in all the prophets of the world. Thus, he is the last of

[1] 2 : 4. [2] 35 : 24.

the noble band of prophets, as foretold by all his predecessors.

It is obvious that the ancient religious scripts contain a good many interpolations. Comparatively, however, the Old and the New Testaments, being less antique have been less tampered with. These have retained quite intact a number of prophecies about the Prophet's advent to which the Holy Qurán also invites attention.

The Israelites and the Ishmaelites sprang of a common progenitor—Abraham. Though the Divine Script revealed to Abraham has not come down to us, yet much light is thrown on God's promises to him concerning the future of his sons, Isaac and Ishmael, by the Old Testament in the Genesis. The Holy Qurán also alludes to the same promises when it says: "And when his Lord tried Abraham with certain words, he fulfilled them. He said, I will make you a leader of men. Abraham said, And of my offspring?[1] My covenant does not include the unjust, said He." Thus Abraham was promised that the gift of prophecy would be granted to his descendants, but that it would be taken away from them if they transgress. Likewise a conjoint prayer by Abraham and Ishmael at the Ka'ba points to the same conclusion: "Our Lord! raise up a prophet to them from among themselves, who should recite Thy verses to them, teach them the Book and wisdom, as also purify them."[2] The Old Testament records a Divine promise to the same effect, made to Abraham, even before the birth of Isaac and Ishmael: "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great and thou shalt be

[1] 2 : 124. [2] 2 : 129.

a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12 : 2–3).

A little reflection makes it clear that these verses unmistakably refer to the descendants of Ishmael, viz., the Muslims, for the Muslims alone, out of the whole world, invoke Divine blessings on Abraham five times a day. This forms part and parcel of the Muslims' daily prayers: "O Lord! bless Muhammad and those who walk in Muhammad's footsteps as Thou didst bless Abraham and his offspring." Then, reference is made to Ishmael by name, in the same book of the Genesis (17 : 20):

"And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold I have blessed him and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly: twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation."

Here the promise regarding Ishmael and his progeny has been made exactly in the same manner as in the case of Abraham and his offspring. The Divine promise in the book of the Genesis is twofold. Firstly: "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and ye and thy seed after thee: Every male child among you shall be circumcised. . . . And it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you" (17 : 10–11.).

This practice of circumcision was for some time common to both the Israelites and the Ishmaelites. But now this divine covenant finds fulfilment only among the 400 millions of Muslims, the spiritual descendants of the Holy Prophet Muhammad; the number of those Israelites, from among whom the practice has not yet died out, being comparatively insignificant. Thus it is obvious that the Muslims are now the inheritors of the

Divine covenant with Abraham; for in them is met with the visible token of circumcision. The second part of the covenant runs thus:

"And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Kanaan, for an everlasting possession and I will be their God." (Genesis 17:7–8.)

This is a second visible sign to show as to who are now the real heirs to the Divine promise with Abraham. It is a historical fact that since the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, this land of promise has been taken away from the followers of the Israelite prophets and made over to the Muslims, who have been in possession of it for the past 13 centuries. The main object of the Crusades was to wrench this Promised Land out of the hands of the Muslims. No doubt it went out of Muslim possession temporarily, but it was restored to them after a short time, in fulfilment of the same promise to Abraham. If ever again it should go out of Muslims' hands, it will be but for a brief period. Its permanent control will always rest with the Muslims. In brief, both the aspects of this Divine covenant with Abraham viz., circumcision and the possession of the Promised Land, furnish a conclusive testimony to the fact that Muhammad, peace be on him, is undoubtedly the Promised Prophet.

The second prophecy announcing the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad found utterance through Moses:

"I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth" (Deut. 18:18). This is as clear as broad day-

light. No one of the Israelite prophets that followed Moses in a long succession, down to Jesus, ever claimed to be the Prophet promised in this prophecy. And for obvious reasons, Moses' successors, who came only to fulfil his law, could not be like unto him. The prophecy was of common knowledge among the Jews, who expected, generation after generation, a Prophet like unto Moses. This is amply borne out by the conversation that passed between John the Baptist and those who came to ask him "Who art thou?" "And he confessed... I am not the Christ. And they asked him, what then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that Prophet? And he answered No" (John 1:19–21). This shows positively that the Jews were in expectation of the appearance of three different prophets. Firstly Elias, who, they thought, was to reappear in person; secondly the Christ; and thirdly a Prophet of such universal fame that in his case, no further specification was thought necessary—"*That* Prophet" was enough to convey who was meant. Such was the household currency Moses' prophecy concerning a Prophet like unto him had gained among the Jews. It is thus evident that just before the appearance of Jesus, the Jews were in expectation of three prophets, as foretold in their Scripture—the Christ, Elias in his second advent and *the Prophet* "like unto" Moses. Now two of these prophecies were fulfilled in the persons of Jesus and John, the one claiming to be the Christ, and the other to have been raised in the spirit of Elias. But neither of the two laid any claim to be the Promised Prophet like unto Moses. Nor did any of those who accepted them, identify them as such. With Jesus, the chain of prophethood among the Israelites

came to an end. Thus the prophecy of Deut. regarding a Prophet like unto Moses remained unfulfilled, so far as the Israelites were concerned. Now, turning to the history of the world, we find that no other prophet except Muhammad, peace be on him, ever claimed to be the Prophet foretold by Moses and no other sacred book but the Holy Qurán ever pointed to any one as fulfilling the prophecy. Facts also bear out the same conclusion. Moses was a law-giver and so was Muhammad, peace be on them. Among the Israelite prophets that succeeded Moses, no one brought a new law. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, being the only law-giving Prophet, was thus the only Prophet like unto Moses. The Holy Qurán says: "Verily, We have raised a Prophet among you, like unto the Prophet that We sent to Pharaoh."[1] Again, it invites the attention of the Jews to the prophecy in Deut. in these words: "A witness from among the Israelites has borne witness of one like him."

The words of the prophecy, "from among their brethren," throw further light on the fact that the Promised Prophet was to rise, not from among the Israelites themselves, but from among their brethren, the Ishmaelites. Thus the prophecy of Deut. refers unmistakably to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, in whom, as a matter of fact it found fulfilment.

A third prophecy in equally clear terms is met with in the same book—Deuteronomy. It says: "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir to them; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came forth with ten thousands of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law for them."

[1] 73 : 15.

"Coming from Sinai" refers to the appearance of Moses; "rising up from Seir" to that of Jesus, for it was at these places that these prophets received the Divine call. Now Paran is admittedly the ancient name for the land of Hedjaz, where arose Muhammad, on whom be peace, from among the descendants of Ishmael. The words "he came forth with ten thousands of saints" point still more unmistakably to the identity of the person to whom they refer. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, of all the world-heroes, is the one solitary historical personage whose triumphal entry into Mecca with ten thousand saintly followers, is an event of common knowledge. The law he gave to the world is to this day known as *"Baiza"* or shining, for it throws a flood of light on all sorts of matters pertaining to the religious, moral and social welfare of man. And it is to this that allusion is made in the words, "from his right hand went a fiery law for them."

A fourth prophecy specifies the land of the Promised Prophet as Arabia. "The burden upon Arabia. In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye travelling companions of Dedanites. Unto him that was thirsty they brought water, the inhabitants of the land of Tima did meet the fugitives with their bread. For they fled away from the swords, from the drawn sword and from the bent bow and from the grievousness of war" (Isaiah 21:13–15).

In the first place the word 'Arabia' is by itself significant enough. Then the mention of one who fled sheds still further light on the object of the prophecy. The history of the world records but one such flight that has won the importance of a red-letter event—the flight

of the Holy Prophet Muhammad from Mecca. It is from this point of time that the Muslim era commences; for it marked, in fact, the opening of a new chapter in the history of Islam, or rather in the civilization of the whole world. A yet clearer testimony, however, is contained in the words "he fled from drawn swords." History confirms that the Holy Prophet Muhammad fled from Mecca while his house was surrounded by his blood-thirsty enemies with their swords actually drawn, ready to fall upon him in a body as soon as he should come out. You will in vain turn the pages of history to find another instance of flight which resulted in issues so far-reaching and momentous, or another prophet who ran away for his life through drawn swords. These two authoritative facts of history, supplemented by a direct mention of the land of Arabia as the birth-place of the Promised Prophet, furnish an indisputable clue that the prophecy refers to the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

There are several other similar prophecies by Israelite prophets, such as David, Solomon, Habakkuk, Haggai, and others. But for the sake of brevity we would refer to one only, by the last of the Israelite prophets, viz. Jesus, which runs thus:

"If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray to the Father and He shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth" (John 14:15–17).

Again,

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things" (John 14:26).

And again,

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you

that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16 : 17).

Yet again,

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye can not bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16 : 12–13).

All these prophetic words predict in unequivocal terms the advent of another prophet after Jesus. Yet Christian theologians have ever been at pains to twist them so as to make them applicable to the Holy Ghost. The terms of the prophecy do not warrant this conclusion. "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you" are words too clear to need any comment. Do the Christian commentators mean to say that Jesus was not blessed with the company of the Holy Ghost? The New Testament says that John was filled with the Holy Ghost even before he was born. Then it speaks of Jesus himself as receiving the Holy Ghost in the shape of a pigeon. Thus the Holy Ghost used to visit men before Jesus as well as in his own time. What is then the reference made to, in the words "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you?" Surely not to the Holy Ghost; for it is almost blasphemous to think that Jesus was without one. Genuine reverence for Jesus requires that we should recognise even his disciples, purified as they were at the hands of their great Master, to have been pure enough to merit the company of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Qurán, at least, credits the companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad with such company in clear terms: "And he aided them with the Holy Spirit from Himself."[1]

[1] 58 : 22.

No doubt the words "Holy Ghost" which have also been used in the prophecy, if not an interpolation, are intended to betoken that the Promised One would have such an inseparable union with the Holy Ghost that his advent might be taken, metaphorically of course, as the coming of the Holy Ghost itself. There are other words in the prophecy, which are not applicable but to the Prophet Muhammad. The characteristic features set forth in the prophecy are found one and all in him. *"That he may abide with you forever"* indicates that there would be no prophet after the Promised One. This is exactly what the Holy Qurán says of the Holy Prophet Muhammad: "The last of the Prophets."[1] Again, "He shall teach you all things," says the prophecy. The same says the Holy Qurán about the dispensation of the Prophet Muhammad: "This day I have made perfect for you your religion."[2] Then the Promised One is called the Spirit of Truth in the prophecy, which is also confirmed by the Holy Qurán in the words: "Say, the truth has come and falsehood has vanished."[3]

Thus, the prayers of Abraham and Ishmael, and the prophecies of Moses, Jesus and others, were fulfilled in the person of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him for ever and for ever.

[1] 33 : 40. [2] 5 : 3. [3] 17 : 81.

CHAPTER V

DESCENT AND BIRTH

"Who sees you when you stand up.
And your turning over among those who
prostrate themselves before Allah."
(The Holy Qurán, XXVI, 218–219.)

ISHMAEL was the eldest son of Abraham. He had twelve sons, as confirmed by the Old Testament, one of them being Kaidar by name whose progeny spread over the Arabian Province of Hedjaz. That the Arabs are the descendants of Kaidar also goes without saying on the authority of the Old Testament. Again, it is admitted on all hands among the Arabs that 'Adnan, to whom the Holy Prophet Muhammad's genealogy has been traced beyond all doubt, was also a scion of Ishmael in about the fortieth descent. There have never been two opinions as to the fact that the Holy Prophet Muhammad was in direct descent from 'Adnan. Further down, in the ninth descent from 'Adnan, there follows Nazr-bin-Kinana, the founder of the Quraish dynasty. Another descent in the genealogical scale and then comes in the ninth place, one Qusayy by name to whom was entrusted the guardianship of the Ka'ba—an office of the highest honour in Arabia. He was the grandfather of Abdul-Muttalib, the Holy Prophet's grandfather. Thus in respect of nobility, the Prophet's dynasty occupies the highest position.

Abdul Muttalib's mother came of the Banu Najjar, which tribe thus stood in the relation of maternal an-

cestors to the Prophet. Abdul Muttalib begot ten sons, the noteworthy of them being, Abu Lahab, who was the arch-leader of the opposition to the Prophet, Abu Talib who brought him up, Hamza who was among the earliest converts and fell at the battle of Uhud, Abbas though a long time without the pale of Islam, yet remained very affectionate to the Prophet, and Abdullah the Prophet's father. Abdullah was married to Amina, daughter of Wahb-bin-Abd-i-Manaf, of the Zuhra family. The pair stood eminent, not only in respect of the nobility of their families, but for what counted more in that age of darkness and corruption, they were both possessed of a pure nature.

A few days after the happy nuptials, Abdullah undertook a commercial journey to Syria. On his way back he fell ill and passed away at Medina. The Holy Prophet was thus born a posthumous child, and he lost his mother while only six years of age. Thus he was deprived of the care of either parent, yet he not only himself cultivated the highest of moral virtues but was also the greatest teacher of morals. It did not fall to his lot to avail himself of the benefits that book-learning can confer, yet he left the world a rich heritage of profound wisdom, which to this day commands universal homage.

Monday, the 12th of Rabi'-ul-Awwal (lunar month), is the commonly known birth-date of the Holy Prophet. According to another research it is the 9th of the same month as corresponding to the 20th of April 571 of the Christian era. Before his birth, his mother received the happy news in a vision. It transpires from certain sayings of the Prophet that he was given the name Muhammad by his grandfather, and Ahmad, by his mother,

each in accordance with a vision. He has been spoken of in the Qurán by both of these names.[1] He himself is reported on trustworthy authority to have said, "I am Muhammad as well as Ahmad." In poetical compositions too, he was addressed by both the names.

This is hardly the place for dwelling at full length on the extraordinary events that attended the Prophet's birth. We would content ourselves with referring to just one, by itself a mighty sign. The very year that the Prophet was born, the Christian chief of Yaman erected a magnificent church in his capital, San'a, with a view to converting it into a general resort for people, both temporal and spiritual, in place of the Ka'ba, which he resolved to demolish. This was, in fact, a life and death struggle between Trinity and Unity. Abraha, the chief, marched at the head of a large army against the Ka'ba to pull it down. He encamped at a distance of three stages from Mecca, and sent word to the Meccans, intimating his mission. In the meantime, some of Abdul-Muttalib's camels were held up by Abraha's soldiers. Abdul Muttalib came in person to the chief to demand back his camels. Much impressed with his imposing appearance, Abraha asked him what had brought him thither, believing no doubt that he wanted to implore him to spare their Sacred House. Abdul Muttalib told him that he was there to demand his camels. Astonished at this unexpected reply, Abraha said: "You are so anxious about your camels, while you care so little concerned about the Ka'ba, which I have come all this way to raze." "I worry myself about the camels," retorted Abdul Muttalib, "for I am their master; as to the Ka'ba, its Master will

[1] 61 : 6; 3 : 143; 33 : 40; 48 : 29.

Himself look after it." The Quraish, finding themselves too weak to offer any resistance to Abraha, evacuated Mecca, taking shelter in the neighbouring hills. While leaving Mecca, Abdul Muttalib took hold of a curtain of the Ka'ba and thus prayed: "O Allah! This is Thy own house. We feel too feeble to defend it. Be pleased to take care of it Thyself." Historians say that a most virulent form of small-pox broke out, in the meantime, in the camp of Abraha, which wrought a terrible havoc, destroying the major part of his forces. The rest took to flight in utter confusion. This is how the Holy Qurán depicts their destruction:

"Hast thou not considered how thy Lord dealt with the possessors of the elephant? Did He not cause their war to end in confusion, and sent down birds in flocks to prey upon them, casting them against hard stones, so He rendered them like straw eaten up?"[1]

This shows that the army fled in such bewilderment that they did not tarry even to inter the corpses of those that perished, so that they formed a feast for the vultures and other birds. This miraculous event came to pass simultaneously with the Holy Prophet's birth. According to some reports, the day of Abraha's discomfiture was the very day of the Holy Prophet's birth.

[1] Chapter 105.

CHAPTER VI

BEFORE THE CALL

> "Indeed, I have lived a life-time among you before it; do you not then understand?"
>
> (The Holy Qurán, x, 16.)

It was a custom among the Arab gentry and nobility that the mothers did not suckle their children; they were on the contrary sent out to be nursed among the country families. At his birth the infant Muhammad was given suck by his mother for a couple of days, and for two or three days by Suwabiya, a handmaid of Abu Lahab. After this he was entrusted to Halima, a nurse of the tribe of Banu Sa'd. Two years later, Halima brought the child to his mother, Amina, who sent him back with the nurse out of the town, Mecca being at the time stricken with an epidemic. He remained in the charge of Halima until the age of six, when he was made over to his mother. At this time, his mother, desiring to pay a visit to the tomb of her husband, undertook a journey to Medina where he was buried, taking the child along with her. On the way, however, the orphan child was deprived also of his mother, who passed away at a place called Abwa, where she was interred. The would-be World-Prophet was thus bereaved at the tender age of six, both of his father and mother. It was not his lot to be brought up under the tender care of his father or even the loving caresses of his mother, nor had he the opportunity to give manifestation to his filial devotion to

his parents. Nevertheless, he meted out the same affectionate treatment to his foster-mother and foster-sisters, in his older days, as though they were his blood relations. Halima once called upon him, after he had received the Divine call. No sooner she appeared, than did the Prophet get up to greet her—a mark of deep respect—and spread his own mantle for her to sit upon. Likewise he showed special regard for his foster-sisters, foster-brothers, nay, for the whole tribe of Banu Sa'd of which Halima came.

At the death of his mother, the child's charge fell to his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib. But barely two years had elapsed when this patronage was also snatched away from him by the hands of death. Thus at the age of eight his guardianship passed to his uncle, Abu Talib. From his very childhood he was possessed of virtues which won him the deep affection of Abu Talib. Whosoever came in contact with him, even at that early age, was impressed with his ways and manners. Abu Talib always kept him in his own company, took him out with himself, wherever he went, and even at night, had him in his own bed. When the Prophet was twelve years of age, Abu Talib undertook a mercantile journey to Syria. The nephew was so attached to his uncle, that he could not bear the idea of such a long separation. Abu Talib consequently allowed him to accompany him on that long journey. It was during this journey that he is said to have met a Christian ascetic, called Bahira. Beholding the boy, so goes the story, he could discern in his face marks of his future greatness and so he advised Abu Talib to take good care of him, for he would some day be the recipient of the Divine call.

At the age of twenty, the Prophet took part in the battle between the Quraish and the Qais—the battle of Fijar (transgression), so called because it was fought in the sacred months when warfare was forbidden. But so far as he himself was concerned, he kept his hands clear from the blood of a fellow-man, causing not the death of a single soul with his own hand. After that he participated in the alliance known as the *"Hilf-ul-Fuzool,"* formed to vindicate the rights of the weak and the oppressed against tyranny. Each member of the alliance was in honour bound to defend the helpless against all sorts of oppressions. The credit of taking the lead in the formation of this humanitarian organization is due to the Prophet and his family, the Banu Hashim. Thus his early inclinations to render help to the distressed go to show that human sympathy was implanted in his very nature.

At this early age, the Prophet's integrity had already won household fame in the town of Mecca. He was commonly known as *"Al-Amin,"* the Trustworthy. The epithet does not imply honesty in money matters, but is all-comprehensive, denoting righteousness in every form. Whosoever happened to have any dealings with him at this period, never ceased to praise him all his life. It was about this time that the necessity for the reconstruction of the Sacred House of Ka'ba arose. The requisite material being all provided, the Quraish conjointly undertook the work. In the course of construction a serious dispute arose as to who should have the proud privilege of laying the Black Stone. This might have resulted in the outbreak of inter-tribal feuds and the consequent destruction of a number of families, when

at length there rose a hoary-headed man with his elderly advice to refer the matter to an arbitrator. Whoever, he suggested, should be the first to appear at the Ka'ba the following day, should be accepted as a judge to decide the point at issue. The proposal was unanimously agreed to. All were eagerly awaiting the next morning, when lo, to the satisfaction of all it was a personage no other than Muhammad, peace be on him. "Here is *Al-Amin!* Here is *Al-Amin!*" all shouted in one voice. And the general confidence in him was fully justified. Taking a sheet of cloth he placed the Black Stone thereon with his own hands. Then he invited head-men from every clan to hold the sheet by the four ends and thus have their share of honour in hauling the stone in position. Thus Muhammad averted, at the age of thirty-nine, what might have developed into a terrible conflagration of internecine warfare.

A respectable widow, Khadija, known in pre-Islamic days as *Tahira* (the virtuous), hearing of the righteousness of Muhammad, entrusted to him the sole charge of her business. Before long much profit accrued to her through his honest dealings. These dealings showed traits of his high morality, and it was this which led Khadija to make proposals for marriage. Thus was he married, at the age of thirty-five, to a widow, fifteen years older than himself. Of Khadija, the Prophet begot four daughters, and two sons. The eldest of all was Qasim, after whom the Prophet was called Abul Qasim, but he died young at the age of two. His eldest daughter was Zainab who was married to Abul 'As. Next to her was Ruqayya, married to 'Usman. She died on the day of the Muslims' victory at the battle of Badr. Next to her came Ummi

Kulsum, who was also married to 'Usman at the death of her elder sister. The youngest of all the daughters was Fatima from whom sprang the progeny known as *Sayyids* in the history of Islam. She was wedded to 'Ali. The youngest offspring of Khadija was a male child who passed away while yet an infant. The Prophet lost all his children from Khadija in his lifetime except Fatima, who survived him for only six months. The Prophet had only one child, Ibrahim, from another wife who also died in infancy. The Prophet was much attached to Khadija and would often remember her in affectionate terms, ever after her death. Once when he was speaking highly of her, 'Ayisha put him a very searching question. Had not God given him, in herself, she asked, a better substitute for Khadija? "No," replied the Prophet, "she accepted me at a time when every one else had rejected me." He was devoted heart and soul to Khadija for her moral virtues. He would freely spend of her wealth in the way of God. Khadija never rejected his recommendation for expending her riches on charitable purposes. She purchased at her own expense a slave for the Prophet, but was simply pleased when the latter set him free. Zaid, the well-known companion of the Prophet, was also once a slave, thus liberated through Khadija's generosity. When the Call came to him, the Prophet was weighed down with the sense of onerous responsibility, and was diffident as to the carrying out of the charge entrusted to him. Khadija, at this moment, cheered up his distressed mind with the encouraging words: "God will never let you see the humiliation of failure. Verily you show due regard for blood-ties, carry the burden of the infirm, practise virtues

that are absolutely extinct, entertain guests and stand by what is righteous in the face of calamities." This shows how deeply Khadija was impressed with the morals and human sympathy of the Prophet. This, in fact, was the cause of the deep love between the husband and the wife. Both were imbued with a profound sense of human sympathy. No one can be better informed of the ways of a man than his own wife, who is in a position to have free access to the innermost recesses of his heart. The fact, therefore, that Khadija had such an implicit faith in the Prophet, furnishes an indisputable testimony to the unimpeachable integrity of his character. The most hostile critic cannot in the face of this evidence, dare throw suspicion on the Prophet's sincerity. For, an impostor cannot possibly command the whole-hearted devotion of one so privy to his secrets.

Khadija's testimony to the sublimity of the Prophet's character carries, no doubt, the greatest weight. But others who came in contact with him were no less devoted to him. The father of Zaid, the liberated slave of the Prophet, hearing of his son's freedom, came over to Mecca to take him away with him. The Prophet, gentle as he was, could not possibly bear to stand between the father and the son. He was only too glad to see a son restored to his loving father. Nevertheless he could not separate Zaid from himself against the latter's own wishes. So on his father's request to bid farewell to Zaid, he left the matter to the free choice of Zaid himself. And what else could a father wish for? Little did he dream that his son's love for the Prophet outdid his filial affection. Though set

at large from his physical bondage, Zaid had already been enthralled by the Prophet's charming personality. To the disappointment of the father, he preferred to stay on with the Prophet. Similarly Abu Bakr's steadfast attachment to the Prophet is a fact of common knowledge. Abu Talib was no less impressed with the nobility of his character. Notwithstanding his adherence to his ancestral form of religion, he stood by the Prophet in thick and thin, defending him, at a grave risk to his own person, against the wrath of the united Quraishite tribes. Such was the deep impression Muhammad's charm of morals had made on his mind. He looked upon it as the height of meanness to desert one so sublime of character. He would rather run all sorts of risks for his sake, in opposing overwhelming odds. When asked by the Quraish to give up Muhammad, he rebuked them in a beautiful couplet: "Woe unto you! No tribe has ever deserted its chief—a chief who carefully guards everything worth guarding. He is not overbearing, nor is he so weak as to entrust his affairs to others. He is generous of heart; through the intercession of his face rain is prayed for. He shelters the orphan and the widow."

In a word, the Prophet commanded the deep attachment of all those who came in contact with him. But what is still more significant, all who came in contact with him were men possessed of sterling moral qualities. Besides his fast friends, well-known in the history of Islam, for the sublimity of their morals, there were others among his early friends, equally distinguished for the nobility of their character, such as Hakim-bin-Hazam, a respectable Quraish chief, who did not give his adhesion to Islam until after the fall of Mecca, and Zamad-bin-Sa'lba.

Both were his intimate friends and both were men of strong moral calibre. This leads to the conclusion that, like the golden touch in the story, whosoever was brought into contact with the magnetic personality of the Prophet, even at this early stage of his life, was electrified with the sublimity and nobility of his morals.

One of the most precious gems in the Prophet's character was his deep sympathy for the poor, the helpless, orphans and widows. He would exert his utmost to see to their needs. As regards this virtue, friend and foe were at one in admiring him. Khadija's consolatory words to him bear testimony to this same trait of his character. Abu Talib points to it as an argument why he must defend him against his enemies. His participation in the *"Hilf-ul-Fuzool,"* an alliance formed with the express object to champion the cause of the oppressed, points to the same. Sympathy for the poor, the helpless, orphans and widows, was in short ingrained in his very nature. The teachings of the Holy Qurán clearly lay it down as the very essence of religion to look after the orphan and the helpless. Whoever discards the orphan or does not prompt others to feed the poor, is spoken of as belying religion itself. The loftiest summit of human dignity consists, says the Qurán, in tending the orphan and the poor. Whosoever does not show respect to the orphan has been threatened with degradation. National decadence follows as a matter of course where neglect of the orphan and the poor prevails in a society. In brief, the Qurán is replete with such like teachings, emphasizing the care of the orphan and the poor.[1]

[1] 2 : 220, 240; 69 : 34.

We learn from the account of the Prophet's early life that he was, from his very childhood, possessed of the highest order of modesty and sobriety. He was not given to the boyish frivolities characteristic of his age. Abu Talib, speaking of him to 'Abbas, bears testimony to the same effect: "I have never seen him tell a lie, indulge in jocosity, vulgarity, or mix with street boys." Warfare was the favourite pastime in the Arabia of his days, but the Prophet by his very nature, felt aversion to it. At the battle of "Fijar" he did not go beyond supplying arrows and other fighting material to his uncles. Superstitions of all sorts, rampant in the country, were also repugnant to his nature. He abhorred idol-worship from his very youth. On a certain occasion when conversation turned upon the chief Arab idols, the *Lat* and the *'Uzza,* he observed that he held nothing else in more detestation than idolatry. He would never participate in the observation of the polytheistic rites of his day. He refused to partake of the meal intended as an offering to an idol.

His heart ached within him at the fallen state of humanity. A burning desire to elevate degraded fellow-beings and bring them round to the path of righteousness, agitated his bosom. He would often retire to the cave of *Hira* and fervently pray to God, with his eyes shedding tears, for the regeneration of mankind.

CHAPTER VII

THE CALL

> "Read in the name of thy Lord who created, He created man from a clot. Read, and thy Lord is most honourable, Who taught (to write) with the pen, taught man what he knew not."
>
> (The Holy Qurán, XCVI, 1–5.)

JUST a little before attaining to the age of forty, Muhammad, peace be on him, took more frequently to solitary meditation. Retiring to the cave of Hira, he would give himself up to Divine contemplation for days. In the meanwhile he received many visions, which were fulfilled to the very letter. While thus absorbed in Divine worship in the *Hira,* the angel Gabriel appeared before him one night, in the month of Ramazan (it was the 609th year of the Christian era) and told him to read out. "I do not know how to read," was the Prophet's reply. Then the angel hugged him close to his bosom and asked him again to read. Three times the angel repeated the request to read, and as many times the Prophet pleaded his inability to do so. Then the angel recited the verses at the top which conveyed a twofold significance. The Prophet was assured that notwithstanding his inability, his attempt at reading, if made in the name of God, would be successful. This implied the general lesson that anything he thought too difficult for himself, he would be able to accomplish with

the help of God. Secondly, the verses contained an allusion to the vast amount of learning which was to see the light of day through the Prophet. This was the first day when the heavy responsibility of Prophethood was placed on his shoulders. The right path in the quest of which he was in so much perplexity was at last revealed to him. The light for which he had been eagerly groping came to him. It was, however, made known to him at the same time, that the stupendous charge of human reformation was to rest on his shoulders. Weak as man is by nature, he is apt to feel the weight even of an ordinary responsibility. Reformation of mankind is a task of an extremely overwhelming anxiety. Moses was commissioned for the reformation of a single nation; yet he found it too much for him single-handed, and thus cried for Divine help: "Give to me a helper."[1] The Holy Prophet Muhammad was charged with the regeneration of the whole of mankind, sunk into the lowest depths of degradation. Yet his strong heart did not give way for a single moment to the slightest oscillation, notwithstanding the almost crushing weight of the responsibility. He shouldered it all by himself, relying solely upon the help of God. He asked for no assistant. But Divine inspiration is an extraordinary phenomenon, and beyond average human experience. It necessitates absolute detachment from one's environments. At the time of this experience the entire corporeal frame of the recipient is possessed with Divine Power. Even when the Prophet grew used to the experience, his body would perspire profusely and become very weighty. One of his com-

[1] 20 : 29.

panions reports that on one such occasion the Prophet's thigh happened to be on his knee. It became so heavy that he feared lest his knee should be crushed. The first experience of inspiration told all the more heavily on his body and caused him to tremble. Thus shivering he went home; his hands and feet grew cold and he asked Khadija to wrap up his body. After a short while when the shaking, with its inevitable accompaniment, a feeling of fear, disappeared, he related the whole thing to Khadija. On hearing of the novel experience he had had, she encouraged him with the inspiring words that God would never desert him and that he must succeed in his mission. Thus she enumerated some of his numerous virtues, his treatment of his kith and kin, his helping the poor, the helpless, the orphan and the widow, his hospitality and his vindication of right under the most trying circumstances. How, she assured him, could it be possible that one possessed of so many virtues should ever come to grief.

Waraqa-bin-Naufal, reference to whom has already been made, was Khadija's cousin. Wearying of idolatry he was on the look-out for a true religion and at length embraced Christianity. Khadija was well-aware of her kinsman's mental anguish for lack of a religion that would carry conviction to his heart yearning after truth. Probably she had heard him talk of the appearance of the Promised Prophet, the Comforter whose advent had been foretold by Jesus. As soon as she found Muhammad called to that office, she took him to her cousin, out of sympathy, of course, for the latter who had lost his eye-sight and was unable to move, aged as he was. No sooner did Waraqa hear what inspiration Muhammad

had received and how, than did he spontaneously exclaim: "This is the very angel that God sent down to Moses," referring obviously to the prophecy by Moses. Then he said, "Would that I might be alive when you are exiled by your people". The Prophet asked him in surprise if he would be thus treated by his kith and kin. "Yes", replied Waraqa, "this is the treatment meted out to every prophet". Soon, thereafter, Waraqa passed away. For this very confirmation, on his part, of the truth of the Prophet's mission he is regarded as one of the companions of the Prophet.

After the first revelation in the cave of *Hira,* Gabriel did not visit the Holy Prophet for some time. This is known as the period of *Fatrat-ul-Wahy* or the cessation of revelation. There is a great divergence of opinion as to the duration of this period. With some, it was two or three years long. But the version of Ibn-i-'Abbas that it lasted but for a short time, is more reliable and corroborated by historical evidence. The story that during this period, the Prophet would go out to the tops of mountains to hurl himself headlong is absolutely unwarranted. According to the established criterion of the authenticity of reports, this is not reliable, for Zuhri, from whom the report has come down, belonged to a later generation, and a report to be reliable must be traced back right up to some of the Prophet's companions. Hence little weight can be attached to it. The idea that the Prophet was thinking of committing suicide is moreover incompatible with the condition of his heart. From his early age his heart was glowing with the desire of human reformation. Now that the very mission was entrusted to him, is it conceivable that he should have

thought of suicide? If the Prophet was observed doing anything unusual, it was only the bare fact that he would retire to the mountains oftener than before; but we must not jump to the preposterous conclusion, unwarranted by the premises, that he went there to commit suicide. He used to go to the mountains long before he received the revelation. Having a meditative turn of mind, he would seek the solitude of mountains, a retreat best suited for calm uninterrupted contemplation. So there is not the least reason to suppose that he went to the mountains with a view to committing suicide. If he roamed about in a state of greater perplexity than before, and this is the utmost that may be alleged, the reason is not far to seek. Divine Light, after which he had been so eagerly groping, disappeared no sooner than it had flashed upon his mind. This made him all the more restless. All the more did his heart long to hear the sweet Divine words once again. It was thus in search of what was so dear to his heart that he would go out to mountains. It was done with no idea of suicide. Every incident of his subsequent life belies the conjecture. In the face of the most disappointing circumstances, his faith in Divine help never wavered for one moment, nor did he ever yield by an hair's-breadth, to the most overwhelming difficulties.

At length, there came an end to the period of cessation. To the Prophet the period looked unusually long; for it was a period of separation from One he loved with all his heart. It is in this sense, that the period has been spoken of by some as having been prolonged. As a matter of fact, the cessation of revelation was based on Providential wisdom. The pressure attendant upon it had already told upon the Prophet's physique. His body

might not stand such a rapid repetition. The interval, therefore, was necessary in the interest of his physical health. Even after a lapse of time which can in no case exceed six months, the revelation was accompanied with the same feeling, though not in the same intensity. Again he asked Khadija now less awe-inspired, to wrap him up. This was the first time he was required to set about his mission in right earnest: "O thou that hast wrapped thyself up! Be up and warn."[1] This led to another stage of the Prophet's life,—that of announcing the word of God and actively delivering His message to all.

[1] 74 : 1–2

CHAPTER VIII

THE EARLY CONVERTS

> "And the foremost are the foremost; these are they who are drawn nigh to (Allah)."
> (The Holy Qurán, LVI, 10–11.)

THE foremost to profess faith in the truth of the Prophet's mission was his wife Khadija. Never for a single moment did she harbour the slightest doubt as to the bonafides of his claim to prophethood. Nay, in moments of depression, she proved a never-failing source of solace to him. Fifteen years back when she did not yet stand to him in the relation of a wife, she saw in him, from the viewpoint of a disinterested person, noble qualities which deeply impressed her. But this early impression grew deeper and deeper the more she came to know of him, through their greater intimacy as wife and husband. When the Prophet received Divine inspiration for the first time, and was in a state of perplexity as to how he should accomplish the mighty work of reformation, this virtuous lady consoled him with the genuine testimony of her own heart. A man of the Prophet's lofty character and broad sympathies, she observed, could not possibly come to grief. No one could claim greater privicy to the Prophet's character. The minutest detail of a husband's life cannot be concealed from his wife. With such an intimate knowledge of his innermost thoughts, she felt convinced that he alone was the right person to have received the

Divine summons for human reformation. Khadija was thus the first as well as the most earnest believer in the mission of the Prophet.

Next to Khadija comes Waraqa on the list of early believers. He passed away during the Cessation period, before the Prophet was called upon to preach his religion, and was thus deprived of the opportunity to formally declare his faith. Nevertheless, he bore testimony, at the interview already referred to, arranged by Khadija, between him and the Prophet, to the fact that the latter was undoubtedly the Promised Prophet. This is enough to entitle him to a foremost place in the list of believers.

Then follows Abu Bakr, one of the Meccan notables. He was held in high esteem for his soundness of judgment and enjoyed a high degree of popularity among his compatriots. Long before the Prophet received the call, Abu Bakr had been on intimate terms with him. His faith in the righteousness of the Prophet was as implicit as that of Khadija. Like her, his faith never wavered for a minute. No sooner did he hear of Muhammad's claim to prophethood, than he made an open profession that Muhammad was indeed a Prophet of God. He comes at the top of the list of male believers.

Ali, the son of the Prophet's uncle, Abu Talib, was also one of the early believers. He knew the Prophet very intimately, for both were brought up together under the loving care of Ali's father. Ali, who knew that the Prophet's veracity was unquestionable, was not slow to accept him.

Zaid-bin-Haris was a liberated slave of the Prophet. His deep attachment to his master has already been

touched upon. He gave preference to the company of the Prophet to that of his kith and kin, refusing to accompany his father back to his home. He was also one of the earliest believers.

Khadija, Abu Bakr, Ali and Zaid were on most intimate terms with the Prophet and had the greatest access to his private life. In the same proportion they had the most implicit belief in the sincerity of his claim to the prophetical office. Not one of them entertained the slightest doubt as to the genuineness of his mission. They had known him to be truthful, *"Al-Amin,"* throughout his life so far. Never during the long period of forty years before the call came to him, had they heard the Prophet tell a lie. Thus it was inconceivable to them to think for a moment that he should have fabricated a lie in laying claim to prophethood. Surely they could not look upon him as an impostor. Being his associates from his early days, they had an opportunity to have a thorough insight into the innermost traits of his character. The more a person knew of the Prophet, the more he was enamoured of him, and the more forward he was to accept his claim. This aspect of the Prophet's character constrains even critics like Muir and Sprenger to admit that Muhammad, peace be on him, was quite sincere in his claim. He had full confidence in the Divine character of his revelations. If there were even the shadow of hypocrisy in his claim, the first to suspect and reject him would have been those so intimately connected with him. On the contrary, they were the foremost to accept him as a true Prophet.

As soon as Abu Bakr embraced Islam, he set about preaching the truth to others. So deep-rooted was his

faith in the righteousness of the Prophet's claim! At a very early period, men of eminent position such as 'Usman, Zubair, Abdur Rahman, Sa'd and Talha, who subsequently made a figure not only in the history of Islam but in world-history, accepted Islam through his earnest missionary zeal. Of those belonging to a humbler status, Bilal, Yasir, his wife Sumayya and his son 'Ammar, also joined the faithful at this early period. 'Abdullah-bin-Mas'ud and Khabbab were also among the early converts, and so was Arqam, whose house was made the centre of the Prophet's missionary activities, about the fourth year after the call. Within the first three years as many as forty persons accepted the faith. This explodes the conjecture that the Cessation period extended over three years. In that case the propagation of the faith must have commenced with the fourth year; while, as a matter of fact, Islam had quite a considerable following at this time. It was this steady growth of Islam that alarmed the Meccans and aroused them to bitter opposition. For this reason the Prophet had to betake himself to a quarter removed from hostile molestations, to carry on his mission more peacefully. Arqam's house was selected for the purpose. The fact that with the fourth year Islam counted no less than forty adherents, furnishes a conclusive testimony that the Cessation period was by no means three years long, nay, not even one year.

The number of Muslims continued to grow, and the conversion of some prominent men from among the Quraish, added to the strength of the small brotherhood. Of these the most noteworthy was Hamza, the Prophet's uncle and foster-brother. He was a man of martial spirit

and fond of sport. For his high morals he enjoyed great esteem and regard among his compatriots. He cherished special love for the Prophet. His conversion came about in the following manner. One day, Abu Jahl was as usual persecuting the Prophet when Hamza's hand-maid appeared on the scene and was shocked to see the cruel treatment. Hamza had been out on a sporting trip. On his return home the maid related the sad tale to him. He was already impressed with the character of his nephew. Now that he heard how pitilessly he was subjected to all sorts of ill-treatment, he was deeply moved. He thought it was unchivalrous in the extreme not to stand by a righteous man such as the Prophet was; nay, it was positively mean to keep aloof. So he made up his mind there and then to throw in his lot on the side of truth and defend it with all the main and might he could command. Straightway he made for the Ka'ba, where Abu Jahl and his partisans were holding a meeting to wage a campaign against Islam, and announced his acceptance of Islam.

The second great man, who proved a tower of strength to Islam, was 'Umar. A man of a fiery temper, he was equally bitter in his opposition to Islam. He went the length of making up his mind to put the Prophet, the root cause of the new movement, to the sword and thus put an end to the whole trouble. With this intent he took up, one day, his sword and made for the Prophet's house. As yet, he did not know that his own sister, Fatima, and her husband Sa'id, had both joined the faith. On his way a Muslim happened to meet him, and, noticing that he was out for mischief, asked him what was he going to do? "To kill Muhammad," replied 'Umar.

The Muslim told him he had better set his own house in order, and then think of killing the Prophet; for his sister and cousin had both embraced Islam. On hearing of the conversion of his own relations, he was much enraged. He took his way towards their house, first to settle accounts with them. It so happened that Khabbab was reciting a passage from the Qurán to them when 'Umar entered their house. Out of fear they concealed the sheets on which the passage was written. But 'Umar had ample proof of their conversion. He had overheard them recite the Qurán. No sooner did he step into the house than he shouted at them saying he had come to know of their apostasy, and taking hold of Sa'id began to belabour him. His sister, trying to save her husband from his wrath, interposed; but she too received injuries and got besmeared with blood. At length, she broke out in a defiant tone: "Do what you will, we have professed Islam." Such a bold front on the part of his sister in spite of 'Umar's taking them to task, had an immensely pacifying effect on his rage. Forthwith he ceased thrashing them and asked for the sheets of the Qurán to be shown to him. His sister fearing lest he should offer some sort of insult to the Holy Book felt reluctant; but on his assurance that he would no more hurt their religious susceptibilities handed over the sheets to him, which contained the chapter entitled *Ta-ha*.[1] This is how it opens: "O man! We have not revealed the Qurán to you that you may be unsuccessful. Nay, it is a reminder to him who fears. A revelation from Him who created the earth, and the high heavens."[2] Having listened to a part of the chapter, he could not

[1] Chapter 20. [2] 20 : 1.

resist the force of the Qurânic truth which went home to him. This set him a-thinking as to the foolishness of his hostility to what turned out to be a teaching so beautiful. Khabbab, who had out of fear kept concealed all this time, was not slow to seize upon the psychological moment. Coming out, he began preaching to him. The mighty 'Umar fell victim to the spiritual force of Islam. Enquiring of Khabbab as to the whereabouts of the Prophet, he went straight off to Arqam's house, which sheltered, at that moment, the Prophet with forty of his companions, male as well as female. 'Umar knocked at the door, at which one of the inmates peeped to see who it was. Seeing 'Umar with his sword hanging about his neck, he was filled with fear, suspecting he was there on a foul mission. The Prophet, however, told him to open the door and let him in. On his appearance, the Prophet had hardly addressed him with just a sentence when he proclaimed: "O, Apostle of Allah! I declare faith in Allah and His Prophet." This filled the whole of the Muslim congregation with intense joy, and all proclaimed aloud the glory of Allah, till the surrounding hills resounded to their shouts of *"Allah-o-Akbar,"* i. e. Allah is Great.

'Umar's conversion proved a tower of strength to the young Muslim brotherhood, too tender, as yet, to face the storm of opposition. It was in the sixth year of the Holy Prophet's mission that these two important additions, i. e. Hamza and 'Umar, were made. So far, the Muslims dared not come out into the open. They had confined their religious activities to within the four walls of Arqam's house. Now that 'Umar had declared his adherence to Islam, they felt strong enough to come out

and say their prayers publically in the sacred house of Ka'ba. In the meantime many from the humbler class had also joined. Those coming of higher families would some time manage to escape the persecutions of the Meccans; but the poor slave converts were in a very helpless and miserable plight. They were ruthlessly put to all sorts of tortures, with nobody to protect them from the wrath of their masters. One of the virtues that constitute the sublimity of Abu Bakr's character was that he freely spent his wealth in purchasing these persecuted slaves from their cruel masters, and set them free. Bilal, 'Amir, Lubaina, Zunnira, Nahdiya and Umm-i-'Ubais were some of those who owed their freedom to Abu Bakr's generosity.

It is a very striking feature of the early spread of Islam that it was limited mostly to the common hewer of wood and drawer of water. The aristocracy turned almost a deaf ear to the message. An incident narrated in the Qurán throws enough light on the Divine purpose why the upper classes were deprived of the blessings of Islam in the days of its infancy.[1] The Prophet was one day busy preaching to some of the Quraish nobility when a poor blind man, Ibn-i-Umm-i-Maktum by name, made his appearance. Not knowing that the Prophet was busy, he put him a few questions, expecting thereby to attract attention. The Prophet occupied as he was with important talk, naturally did not like the interruption. He did not scold him nor did he utter a word of displeasure, but just a ripple of disapproval passed over his forehead. But the Almighty God who wanted him to attain to the highest pinnacle of morals as well as

[1] Chapter 80.

manners did not let this incident pass unnoticed. Forthwith came the warning through Divine revelation: "His forehead knitted and he turned away his face when the blind man came to him."[1] It went on to say that it was just possible that that very blind man might benefit by his preaching; for the Qurán was a code of life wherewith humble people could be raised to the highest plane. It also advised the Prophet not to attach much weight to great persons; the advancement of the cause of Islam was bound up with the poor and the weak who, in their struggle to uphold the cause of Islam, would themselves be glorified. And as a matter of fact this was the underlying Divine purpose why the light of Islam was hailed mostly by the weaker element of the inhabitants of Mecca. They were intended to serve as a concrete illustration of how ordinary people, supported by the Divine hand, can accomplish what is beyond the power of the most mighty. And we know it for a fact, in the light of history, that not only did Islam enable the same class of the weak and the despised to wield the sceptre of royal authority, but at the same time raised them to the highest plane of morals, art, science and philosophy, and made them the torch-bearers of learning at a time when the world was enshrouded in the darkness of ignorance. What can be a greater testimony to the uplifting force of Islamic teachings?

The incident of the blind man, however insignificant, throws a flood of light on a problem of great moment. It furnishes data to determine the much disputed nature of the Divine revelation of which the Prophet was the recipient. Was it a voice from within the Prophet's own

[1] 20 : 1–2.

heart, or was it a message received from an external source? The revelation made in consequence of the Prophet's inattention to the blind man bears a testimony to the fact that it could not possibly be the outcome of the inner workings of the Prophet's own mind. It consists in a Divine admonition reproaching the Prophet for his ignoring the blind man. Nobody can afford to have his faults brought to public notice, if he could only help it, however penitent he might feel within himself. The Prophet, notwithstanding the magnanimity of his heart, could have no special anxiety to give general publicity to the omission on his part, however immaterial. This shows it was some external source from which the revelation came—the Divine Being Himself. He gave it currency, though he knew it was a standing Divine disapproval of his action for all time to come. Cheerful submission to the Supreme Will of God was the key-note of his life. In addition to establishing conclusively the external source of revelation, the incident speaks volumes for the Prophet's entire self-effacement in submission to the Will of Allah.

CHAPTER IX

PERSECUTION

> "Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, We believe, and not be tried."
>
> (The Holy Qurán, XXIX, 2.)

WHENEVER the Divine Will ordains to inspire a band of righteous people to work as torch-bearers of truth to a corrupt humanity, there never fails to appear a band of those who pitch themselves in deadly opposition to them, and inflict upon them all sorts of troubles and tortures. And as a matter of fact, the storm of bitter opposition is absolutely indispensable. The persecutions to which they are subjected serve as a crucial test of the bonafides of their motives. They cheerfully put up with humiliations, endure hardships and cruelties, but never for a moment give up the truth for which they stand. In fact, they live if they can, for the truth, and die, if they must, for the truth. Besides, afflictions constitute the only training ground for fostering virtues of steadfastness and perseverance, without which man cannot attain to moral perfection. Unless one is hemmed in on all sides by overwhelming obstacles and afflicted with excruciating hardships, one cannot cultivate these qualities. Thus adversities that befall such people, are, in fact, blessings in disguise, calculated to bring about their moral edification. Over and above

these, there is a third object in view. The Almighty God wants to bring home to mankind that a plant tended by Divine hand, however slender it may look, survives the most furious blasts of hostile wind. Consequently in accordance with this Divine law, the Prophet and his companions had to suffer untold troubles at the hands of the Meccans.

At the outset, the opposition of the Meccans to the message of Islam, took the form of sneering and jeering at the Prophet. They did not attach much importance to the movement, thinking that it would die, in due course, a natural death. It was treated with contemptuous neglect, and as unworthy of any serious attention. All that the believers received at the Meccans' hands in these days was disdainful ridicule. Resort to violence was not yet thought necessary. When they passed by the believers they would laugh and wink at them, by way of derision.[1] Sometimes they would call the Prophet an idle visionary, given to poetic rhapsodies, destined to come to nought as a matter of course.[2] There was something wrong with his brain, they would say. But as men of light and leading gradually gathered round him, the Meccans were awakened to a sense of the danger. Now they did not content themselves with an indifferent ridicule, but took to active violence. Once, when the Prophet was saying his prayers in the Ka'ba, lying prostrate, Abu Jahl placed the dirty entrails of a she-camel on his neck. As he used to go out of his house for prayers at early dawn, one way adopted to tease him was that branches of prickly shrubs were strewn on his way, to entangle him in the dark. Sometimes dust

[1] 84 : 30; 34. [2] 52 : 30.

was thrown at him; sometimes he was pelted with stones. One day, a number of men from among the Quraish nobility fell upon him. One, 'Uqba-bin-Abi-Mu'att threw his mantle around his neck and twisted it till he was on the point of getting strangled. Abu Bakr, appearing on the scene, intervened and rescued him, saying: "Do you mean to kill a man, merely because he says that God is his Lord?" But the brunt of the oppression had to be borne by those not coming of some clan of note among the Quraish, especially by the slaves, male as well as female. These were subjected to the most cruel forms of torture. Bilal, the Abyssinian slave, was put to a most ruthless form of physical pain by his master to make him renounce Islam. But Islamic teachings possessed a charm too strong for all these afflictions. They would part with life itself rather than give up Islam, which had taken deep root in their hearts. Bilal was persecuted in the following manner. His oppressor would make him lie flat on burning ground under the scorching heat of the Arabian sun at midday. Heavy slabs of stone were then placed on his chest. Notwithstanding such extremely painful tortures he would loudly repeat in a state of senselessness *"Ahad"* (One), i. e. there is but one God. 'Ammar's father, Yasir, and his mother, Sumayya, were persecuted in the most barbarous way. The tale of their afflictions makes one's hair stand on end. Yasir's legs were tied to two camels and the beasts were driven in opposite directions. He was so brutally torn to pieces. Sumayya was killed in a similar brutal but far more disgraceful manner. Lubaina was the hand-maid of 'Umar. The latter used to go on beating her in his pre-conversion days till he would get tired. Then he would say: "I leave

thee now, not because I pity thee, but because I am tired of beating thee."

Even converts of high birth were not spared. They were put to pain by their own kinsmen. 'Usman came of a high family and occupied a high social position. Yet his uncle, securing him by means of a rope, gave him a sound beating. 'Umar's treatment towards his cousin and sister has already been described. Zubair was wrapped up in a matting and made to inhale smoke. Abu Bakr was not immune. They were, one and all, subjected to every imaginable form of cruelty; but no amount of hardship could drive the love of Islam out of their hearts. The Meccans themselves were struck with wonder at such a steadfast adherence on their part. But their fortitude added fuel to the fire of their persecutors' rage, and the latter resorted to still more bitter persecution.

CHAPTER X

EMIGRATION TO ABYSSINIA

> "And those who fly for Allah's sake after they are oppressed, We will most certainly give them a good abode in the world."
> (The Holy Qurán, XVI, 41.)

THE fifth year after the call set in, and the Prophet had by now collected round him a band of over fifty devoted comrades. A common faith consolidated them into a small brotherhood, which was cemented all the more closely by the persecutions on the part of the Meccans. Besides, their numerical strength was growing day by day. The Prophet was so tender-hearted that his heart would melt at the pain even of his foes. How could he bear then the sight of the tortures of his own friends? Doubtless, these friends were a source of great strength to himself, and of much good to his cause. He could ill-afford to dispense with a single one of them. Nevertheless when he saw that the Meccans' cruelty was daily growing in bitterness, he advised them to betake themselves to a place of safety. Single-handed would he brave the worst storm of the Meccans' opposition, rather than see his companions tortured so ruthlessly. He had not the least anxiety, nor dread of his infuriated foe, on his own account. So he recommended his companions to seek shelter in Abyssinia, saying: "There is a land where no one is wronged—a land of justice. Stay there until it should please Allah to open for you a way out of these difficulties." The inhabitants as well as their king, entitled the Negus, were Christian by religion.

Consequently, the first batch of emigrants, counting eleven, was formed to sail for Abyssinia. Four of them were accompanied by their wives, 'Usman with his wife, Ruqayya, the Prophet's daughter, being among them. In the month of Rajab, in the fifth year of the call, the party left Mecca, some mounted, others on foot. Arriving at the port, they embarked in a hurry, and left the shores of their sweet homeland to seek safety elsewhere. The Quraish, as soon as they heard of their departure, despatched their men poste-haste to bring them back. To their disappointment, however, the vessels had already left, and they had to go back empty-handed. But this was not the end of their wrath. They were anxious that Islam should nowhere get a foothold. It was at last decided to send a delegation to the King Negus to ask him not to give the Muslims shelter, and to hand them over to the Meccans. Abdullah-bin-Rabi' and 'Amr-u-bin-'As were chosen for the mission, and they went over to Abyssinia with handsome presents. The first step they took on reaching there was to enlist the sympathies of the priestly class. They told them that the Muslims had set up a religion which was also antagonistic to Christianity, and supplemented this appeal to their religious prejudice by making them valuable presents. Thus they succeeded in prevailing upon the clerics to exert their influence with the king on their behalf, and made their way to the court of King Negus. They put up their claim for the extradition of the Muslim emigrants, who, they alleged, were guilty of an innovation in religion, in opposition to their ancestral form of creed as well as Christianity. The King thereupon summoned the Muslims to his court, demanding to submit what

defence they could, to the charge of heresy brought against them. On this, one of them, Ja'far-bin-Abi Talib, rose, thus addressing the King: "O, King! We were an ignorant people, given to idolatry. We used to eat corpses even of animals that died a natural death, and to do all sorts of disgraceful things. We did not make good our obligations to our relations, and ill-treated our neighbours. The strong among us would thrive at the expense of the weak, till, at last, God raised a Prophet for our reformation. His descent, his righteousness, his integrity and his abstemiousness are well-known to us. He called us to the worship of God, and exhorted us to give up idolatry and stone-worship. He enjoined us to tell the truth, to make good our trust, to have regard for our kith and kin, and to do good to our neighbours. He taught us to shun everything foul and to avoid bloodshed. He forbade all sorts of indecent things, telling lies, misappropriating orphans' belongings, and bringing false accusations against the chastity of women. So we believed in him, followed him, and acted up to his teachings. Thereupon our people began to do us wrong, to subject us to tortures, thinking that we might abjure our faith and revert to idolatry. When, however, their cruelties exceeded all bounds, we came out to seek an asylum in your country, where we hope, we shall come to no harm." After this Ja'far recited to him a passage from the Holy Qurán, which touched his heart. The Negus told the Quraish embassy that he would by no means hand over the refugees to them. Thus disappointed they hit upon another plan. Next day, they tried to excite the King, by telling him that the heretics did not believe in the Divinity of Jesus. But in this too, their hopes were

utterly frustrated. The Muslims confessed they did not look upon Jesus as God but as his chosen prophet. The Negus picking up a straw and pointing to it said: "Jesus is in fact not even this much more than the Muslims have described him to be." The Quraish delegation was unsuccessful. This is known as the First Emigration to Abyssinia.

It is noteworthy that the Quraish felt so much upset at the Muslims' emigration to Abyssinia. They pursued them first to the port to capture them and when disappointed, followed them to the court of the Negus. What, after all, made them so ill at ease? Was it the Muslims' anti-idolatrous propaganda that turned the Quraish so dead against them? But the emigrants were now too far off to offend their susceptibilities by speaking ill of their idols. As a matter of fact, the animosity aroused through religious differences had by now become personal. They could not tolerate that the Muslims, whom they drove bag and baggage out of their homes, should flourish anywhere abroad. They were bent upon their destruction, and therefore went all the way long to the Negus to bring them into trouble. This exactly was the reason why they allowed the Prophet and his companions no rest, even at Medina, where they subsequently emigrated. At Medina, there was no power to shield the Muslim refugees against their blood-thirsty enemies, the Quraish, who, therefore, were emboldened to extirpate them at the point of the sword. The instinct of self-preservation roused the Muslims to strike a blow in self-defence. Thus came about the Islamic battles, entered upon as a purely defensive measure. The Quraish did not let them alone, even when they

had turned them out of their hearth and home. Thus the Muslims were left no alternative but to turn at bay and face the pursuers manly. Nevertheless, there are critics who, blindfolding their eyes to solid historical facts, ascribe the initiatory step in these battles to the Prophet, and on that account stigmatize Islam as a religion of the sword. Nothing, however, can be further from the truth. The events in connection with the Abyssinian Emigration, as set forth above, throw enough light on the fact, that heresy or no heresy, the Quraish were bent upon an utter annihilation of the Muslim brotherhood at all costs.

When the Quraishite delegation returned unsuccessful from Abyssinia, their rage knew no bounds. They continued their persecutions with added fury. So far they had been viewing the Muslims' fortitude under such cruel hardships with great astonishment. But the Abyssinian emigration gave them a conclusive proof that the Muslims were ready to run all sorts of risks, and undergo every form of affliction in the cause of Islam. They would shrink from no danger in the path of Allah. Moreover, when the rest of the Muslims at Mecca came to know of the Negus' generous protection extended to their brethren, a number of them left for Abyssinia next year. This is known as the Second Emigration to Abyssinia. The Quraish did their utmost to check this tide of emigration, but all in vain. Excluding the children, as many as one hundred and one, both male and female, flocked to Abyssinia. They settled there, all of them, with the exception of 'Usman and his wife, who returned to Mecca, soon after. It was not until seven years after the Prophet's flight from Mecca that they rejoined their

Muslim brotherhood at Medina. In accordance with the Truce of Hudaibiya in the sixth year of Hegira, there was to be a state of armistice between the Muslims and the Quraish for ten years. This provided a certain amount of security for the Muslims in the land of Arabia, and made it possible for the Abyssinian Muslims to come back to their kith and kin. It also furnishes a clue to the fact that even in Medina, the Muslims were not in a state of safety until 7 A.H. when the Truce of Hudaibiya brought them a brief period of relief.

The sympathetic treatment accorded to the Muslims by the Negus was gratefully reciprocated by the former. During their sojourn in the kingdom, when hostilities broke out with one of the adversary states, the Muslims ungrudgingly placed their quota of service at his disposal. They also prayed to God for his victory. This shows how grateful a people they were. From that early period, they had for their motto the Quránic verse that "Nothing but good must be the return for good."[1]

An incident in connection with the First Emigration to Abyssinia is noteworthy. Some time later, the chapter entitled *"An-Najm"*[2] was revealed to the Prophet, at the end of which comes the verse enjoining prostration before God. This was the first occasion when the practice of prostration known as *"Sijda-i-Tilawat,"* in the course of Quránic recitation, now in vogue among the Muslims, was introduced. The Prophet while reciting this chapter prostrated as soon as he came to the verse which says: "Then prostrate before God and worship Him."[3] According to an authentic report, the idolatrous Meccans present there also joined in the prostration, for they pro-

[1] 55 : 60. [2] Chap. 53. [3] 53 : 62.

fessed faith in God notwithstanding their worship of idols.

A perverted version of this incident has been given by the opponents of Islam. The Prophet, they allege, thinking it expedient to come to a compromise with the idolaters, allowed in this chapter a concession to idol-worshippers. And this is why the idolaters too bowed down in prostration. But the report on which this allegation is based is absolutely unwarranted. There is no trustworthy report of the incident except the one referred to above. The fact that the Abyssinian Emigrants returned home does not show that some compromise had been effected. The news of the unbelievers' prostration may, on the other hand, have created an impression that they had accepted Islam, and the news having reached the Abyssinian Muslims, some of them may have come back to their motherland. But as a matter of fact, the few emigrants who returned to Mecca, did so with a view to informing the rest of their brethren of the peace and liberty they enjoyed under the rule of the Negus, and thus persuading them to accompany them thither, and this was what actually happened in the Second Emigration to Abyssinia.

CHAPTER XI

ATTEMPTS AT SUPPRESSION

> "And had it not been that We had already established thee, thou wouldst certainly have been near to incline to them a little."
>
> (The Holy Qurán, XVII, 74.)

ATTEMPTS to suppress the propagation of Islam were not confined to the tortures to which the Prophet and his comrades were subjected. Many and varied were the ways adopted to extinguish the Divine light. Preaching was in the beginning carried on in secret. But soon the Prophet received Divine revelation to promulgate broadcast what he had been commissioned with, and to warn his near relations.[1] Thereupon he had to come out into the open to proclaim the Divine message. Climbing one day on Mt. Safa, he called out to each one of the Quraishite tribes till they all assembled there. "Have you," enquired the Prophet, "ever heard me tell a lie?" In one voice they replied that they had ever known him to be righteous and trustworthy. "If I should tell you that hidden behind this mountain is a large army ready to attack you," enquired the Prophet, "would you believe me?" "Certainly," was the unanimous reply, "for we have never heard you tell a lie." Then he announced to them the word of God, exhorted them to give up idolatry, to eschew all forms of evil, to believe in the unity of God, and to come to the path of virtue. At this they all got out of temper, Abu Lahab behaving most rudely to him. By and by this man's enmity

[1] 15 : 94; 26 : 214.

to the Prophet grew bitter. He and his wife would torment and trouble him in every way possible. In the days of pilgrimage when people from all parts of Arabia met together, the Prophet would move about among them communicating his message. Wherever he went, Abu Lahab would follow close upon his heels, warning the people not to take him seriously, for he was an imbecile.

When the Quraish saw that neither oppression, nor obstacles could succeed in suppressing the Islamic movement, and that its adherents did not mind undergoing any amount of hardship, such as bidding farewell to their sweet homes, rather than giving up Islam, they secretly resolved to make away with the Prophet, the root cause of the whole trouble. Consequently every effort was made to put an end to his life in an underhand manner, which failing, the Quraish made up their mind to make an open assault on his life. But according to the social code of Arabia, every tribe was in honour bound to protect each one of its individual members. An attempt to take the life of the Prophet, it was apprehended, might lead to civil war. It was thus necessary to obtain the consent of Abu Talib, the Prophet's uncle and guardian, before taking the proposed bloody step. Accordingly a deputation, consisting of the Quraish chiefs, including Abu Jahl, waited upon Abu Talib in this connection. In order to win him over to their wicked plot, they addressed him thus: "Your nephew slights our gods, finds fault with our ancestral religion, calls us and our forefathers ignorant and misguided. You should deal with him yourself or permit us to settle accounts with him. You are as much duty-bound to vindicate the honour of our common faith as we are." Abu Talib,

however, put them off with evasive though polite words. Obviously the accusations brought against the Prophet were highly exaggerated. He never abused their gods, for the Holy Qurán positively forbids doing so: "Do not abuse those whom they worship besides Allah."[1] The Holy Qurán, intact as it is to-day, in all its original purity, may be consulted from one end to the other, to see that there is not a word therein insulting the gods of the infidels. All it says concerning them, is that they can do them no good, nor can they avert any harm that may come to them, and that polytheism and idolatry are evil courses.[2] In order to inflame Abu Talib, the Quraish misrepresented these statements as abuses.

The Prophet, however, delivered his message, as usual, and as days rolled by, many a heart was deeply impressed with the truth of Islam. The Quraish, finding their previous warning to Abu Talib utterly ignored, firmly resolved this time to press the point to a decisive issue. They reminded Abu Talib of their first representation to him concerning the matter, and told him they could no longer tolerate that state of things. He must either withdraw his protection from the Prophet or make common cause with him, so that they might fight it out to a finish. This was an ultimatum, so to say, of war, to Abu Talib. It was, no doubt, a very critical situation. Abu Talib found himself between the horns of a dilemma. The prospect of a war against his own kith and kin on the one hand, and the deep attachment he cherished for his nephew on the other, made it hard for him to decide which course to adopt. In this state of perplexity, he sent for the Prophet, and explained the entire situation to him.

[1] 6 : 109. [2] 25 : 55.

"Have pity on me," he said, "and do not charge me with a responsibility too heavy for me. I am not a match for the united opposition of the whole of the Quraish."

A critical situation! The entire clan is thirsting for his blood, and, but for the intervention of Abu Talib, would have taken his life in broad daylight. But alas! Abu Talib's door is also about to close against him. No earthly protection is now there to shield him against the wrath of his enemies. His companions who would have laid down their dear lives for his sake, are far off on the continent of Africa. Does all this mean anything but sure and imminent destruction? It were but human, should the Prophet's heart sink within him. It were but natural, should the instinct of self-preservation reconcile him to the expedient of coming to a compromise with his opponents, and thus, having saved his life, betake himself to some other place and there propagate his faith. Does any such inclination, perfectly excusable under circumstances so critical, creep into his heart? No, not the shadow of it. He has an unshakeable conviction in Divine protection. He will not yield an inch of ground in regard to his mission, which is, in fact, the end-all and be-all of his life. No sooner do the above words come out of Abu Talib's lips than he declares without the least ado: "O, uncle, should they place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, in order to make me renounce this mission, it shall not be. I will never give it up until it should please God to make it a triumph, or until I should perish in the attempt." But conscious of the disappointment his attitude must have caused to his uncle, who had so tenderly brought him up and had been protecting him at great risk, his eyes bubbled up

with tears, and he departed with a sad heart. Abu Talib had not abjured his ancestral form of worship, but of the Prophet's high character he was much enamoured. It was far easier to him to face death rather than leave the Prophet alone. Forthwith he sent for the Prophet again, and thus assured him: "Do whatever you will. Under no circumstances will I desert you."

The Quraish had little doubt about Abu Talib's yielding to their united demand. They were much surprised when they heard of his determination to stand by the Holy Prophet, come what may. An internecine war among themselves, they thought, was fraught with grave danger. This might ruin the sovereign authority of their clan for good. This time, therefore, they made an attempt to prevail upon Abu Talib by offering him a lure, instead of forcing him with a threat. Taking 'Ammara-bin-Walid, a handsome youth, along with them, they asked Abu Talib to adopt him as his son and hand over Muhammad to them, to be executed for his offence against their established ancestral religion. "What a funny proposal!" replied Abu Talib. "You want me to take charge of your boy to bring him up, while you should have mine to be put to death. This can never be." The Quraish were thus once more disappointed. Apprehending lest they should resort to some violent measures against his family, the Banu Hashim, Abu Talib summoned together all the members of the family, and forewarned them against the danger. It was unanimously agreed upon that the Holy Prophet would in no case be handed over to the Quraish, whatever measures they might adopt against Banu Hashim. With the solitary exception of Abu Lahab, who had joined

hands with the Quraish, the entire family was prepared to take up arms in defence of the Holy Prophet. Such was the popularity he enjoyed among the whole family of Banu Hashim. They were all devoted to him, heart and soul, for his lofty morals. Notwithstanding their religious differences with him, they were ready to protect him at the risk of their lives.

The Quraish, however, had not yet exhausted their resources for arriving at a settlement without resort to bloodshed. They had yet another card to play. Persecution had proved futile, but allurements, it struck them, offered direct to the Holy Prophet, might still succeed. Abu Talib and the Banu Hashim being inexorable, the only alternative left was to try this method. A deputation was accordingly formed to come to an understanding with the Holy Prophet on this basis. They called on the Holy Prophet and offered him the most tempting terms, which were:

"If your ambition is to possess wealth, we will amass for you as much of it as you wish; if you aspire to win honour and power, we are prepared to swear allegiance to you as our overlord and king; if you have a fancy for beauty, you shall have the hand of the finest maiden of your own choice." Irresistible temptations no doubt! From a destitute, helpless and persecuted man to a mighty potentate is a big lift. But the Holy Prophet's heart was free from the least alloy of self-seeking. To the utter disappointment of the Quraish delegation, he replied thus: "I want neither pelf nor power. I have been commissioned by God as a warner unto mankind. I deliver His message to you. Should you accept it, you shall have felicity in this life as well as

in the life to come; should you reject the word of God, surely God will decide between you and me." This frustrated the last attempt of the Quraish at a compromise. Persuasion through temptations proved as fruitless as persecution. The persecution was unbearable, but the temptation was far more irresistible. Were it not for Divine steadfastness infused into the Holy Prophet's bosom, the tortures inflicted on him and the allurements placed in his way would have shaken him from his position. But there he stood, firm as a rock, baffling all attempts to dissuade him from his mission. It is to this that the Holy Qurán alludes in the following verse: "And had it not been that We had already made thee firm, thou wouldst certainly have been near to incline to them a little."[1]

Disappointed on all sides, the Quraish decided to resort to the use of their last weapon. It was the seventh year since the Call, and the majority of the Muslims had made their escape good to Abyssinia. Hamza and 'Umar had embraced Islam. Abu Talib had refused point blank the Quraishite demand that he should withdraw his protecting hand from the Prophet. Excepting Abu Lahab, the whole of the family of Banu Hashim had decided to stand by him, and fight for him till the last man. Moreover, the light of Islam went on spreading from one clan to another. The Quraish therefore decided to place a social ban on the Banu Hashim. Inter-marriage and commercial relations with them were strictly forbidden. An agreement to this effect was drawn up and the scroll hung up in the Ka'ba, to give it a tone of sanctity. On hearing of this the Banu

[1] 17 : 74.

Hashim betook themselves to a secluded part of Mecca, known as the *Shi'b,* the prohibited quarter. But Abu Jahl spared no pains to keep a vigilant watch to ensure that the blockade was strictly observed. When Hakim-bin-Hazam, for instance, tried to supply some provision to Khadija, who was nearly related to him, Abu Jahl offered obstruction. But never throughout these trying times, did the Banu Hashim waver in their resolution. They cheerfully suffered all this for the sake of the Prophet, which they would never have done, if they had not had a deep-rooted respect for him. During the ban period, the preaching of the Prophet was confined to within the four walls of the *Shi'b.* In the days of pilgrimage, however, when bloodshed was looked upon as an unpardonable sacrilege among the Arabs, he would come out and communicate his message to the people assembled from far and near. Abu Lahab would follow him like a shadow, warning the people against his teachings. He was a liar, he would say, and must not be believed. As a result, wherever the Prophet went to deliver his message, he met with the rebuff why was it that his own people discarded him, if he was righteous in his claim. In short this was a period of great hardship for the Banu Hashim, and of suspension of all propagating activities.

In the meantime, there arose a murmur against the hardship to which the Banu Hashim were subjected. The gentle-hearted among the Quraish were feeling the severity of the ban, till the day came when some openly condemned it. Consequently five of the leading men of the Quraish decided among themselves that the ban should be removed, and the agreement torn to pieces. A Divine sign was also revealed in the meantime. The

scroll containing the agreement, suspended in the Ka'ba, was eaten up by ants. This was brought to the notice of the Quraishite chiefs, by Abu Talib, as a mark of Divine disapproval. It was consequently agreed upon that the pledge should be declared as null and void, if on inspection it was found defaced. Accordingly they went to the Ka'ba to examine the agreement, which turned out to be actually eaten up by ants. The opportunity was eagerly seized upon by those who had already felt the severity of the ban. Putting on their arms they went over in a body to the gate of the *Shi'b* and openly announced their opposition to the agreement of boycott. They brought the Muslims out and sent them to their respective homes. Nobody had the courage to offer any resistance. The ban lasted for three years.

Immediately after coming out of the *Shi'b*, Abu Talib, the Prophet's uncle, who had so far proved his mainstay, passed away. Though he did not accept Islam, yet the Prophet had a very deep attachment to him. The bereavement was thus a great shock to him. But calamities, they say, seldom come single. Shortly afterwards, his faithful wife and staunchest friend, Khadija, also expired. She had all along served the Prophet whole-heartedly and had been a never-failing source of solace to him in moments of sadness and sorrow. In her death he suffered an irreparable loss. Both these shocks the Prophet sustained in the tenth year after the Call, which is on that account, known, in Islamic history, as *'Am-ul-Huzn* i. e. the "Year of Grief." With the loss of two great comforters and helpers, such as Abu Talib and Khadija, the Prophet had to face greater difficulties. Their death ushered in a new era of troubles.

CHAPTER XII

THE LATER MECCAN PERIOD

> "And surely they purposed to unsettle thee from the land that they might expel thee from it, and in that case, they will not tarry behind thee but a little."
>
> (The Holy Qurán, XVII, 76.)

THE Prophet had now to face still greater difficulties in the propagation of his message. Whatever restraint Abu Talib and Khadija exerted on the malice of the Quraish was now, at their death, also removed. Their hands were now perfectly unrestrained to deal with the Prophet to the full gratification of their spleen. But in spite of the gloomy situation, the Prophet's conviction in his ultimate triumph was absolutely unshaken. When walking about one day, dust was thrown at him. Returning home, his daughter began washing his head, shedding tears at the same time at the pitiable plight of her dear father. "Do not weep, my dear child," he consoled his daughter, "Allah will surely help your father." So deep-rooted was his faith in the ultimate success of his mission, in the face of this bitter opposition! He never entertained the idea of betaking himself, like the rest of his companions, to Abyssinia, where he would have found a safe asylum. He did not for one moment despair of the regeneration of the land of his birth. He felt confident that the island must some day awaken to the truth of Islam. Enshrouded as he was with a thick mist of disappointing circumstances, his eye could yet perceive a ray of hope.

The conviction that his deadly enemies would one day be his devoted friends was deeply seated in his heart. The hard-heartedness of the Meccans, however, forced him to turn his attention to Ta'if, where he hoped people might listen to his word. Thither he went with Zaid in his company, and approached three respectable gentlemen, who were brothers, and who came of the noblest family of the place. But to his disappointment, all of them turned a deaf ear to him. For about ten days he stayed there delivering his message to several people, one after another, but all to no purpose. On every side, he was met with the taunt that he must first convince his own people, if he was true in his claim. At last he was asked to go away; but as soon as he walked out of the town, the dregs of the society, at the instigation of the town elders, followed him hooting. They lined the route on both sides to a great distance, and as he passed along between them, he was pelted with stones in the legs. When dripping with blood and unable to walk further he would seat himself, a wretch would again raise him up by the hand. "Walk on," he would shout at him, "this is no place for you to rest at." This went on for about three long miles. He was pelted with volleys of stones, till his very shoes were besmeared with blood. At last, when his persecutors let him alone, he seated himself in an orchard, to take a little rest. The owner of this small garden, 'Utba-bin-Rabi'a, a non-believer though he was, took pity on him and sent him a bunch of grapes by his Christian slave 'Addas. The Prophet, as he stretched out his hand towards the grapes, uttered the words, "In the name of Allah,"—words which every Muslim is supposed to repeat while setting his hand to any piece of work.

Surprised at this, the slave curiously asked the Prophet what the words were. On being informed of the message of Islam, he readily accepted the truth.

Rejected by man in every quarter, the Prophet turned in this state of utter helplessness to Almighty God. His prayer is not an expression of the feelings of despondency or plaintiveness. These feelings were quite unknown to him. His heart was too full of faith in Divine help to cry out *"Eli, Eli, Lama Sabaktani"* (O my God, O my God! why hast thou forsaken me?). This is how he addressed God:

"O, my God! To Thee do I complain of the feebleness of my strength, of my lack of resourcefulness and my insignificance in the eyes of people. Thou art most Merciful of all the merciful. Thou art the Lord of the weak. To whom art Thou to entrust me, to an unsympathetic foe, who would sullenly frown at me, or to a close friend, to whom Thou hast given control over my affair. Not in the least do I care for anything except that I may have Thy protection for me. In the light of Thy face do I seek shelter—the light which illumines the heaven and dispels all sorts of darkness, and which controls all affairs in this world as well as in the hereafter. May it never be that I should incur Thy wrath, or that Thou should be angry with me. There is no strength, nor power, but through Thee."

Would there were a feeling heart within human bosom to appreciate the purity of the soul that gave utterance to sentiments so sublime, under circumstances so trying! Is it imaginable that the heart of an impostor should be capable of emotions so noble, especially when he gives vent to them immediately after suffering so much? With marvellous calmness he underwent all the

hardships that no son of man can bear. With surprising fortitude he bore all those troubles that might tempt one to commit suicide. What a firm faith in God, what a cheerful resignation to His supreme Will, what an unalloyed spiritual happiness! All these, he says, are insignificant so long as he enjoys God's pleasure.

A few days later he returned to Mecca, on the assurance of Mut'im-bin-'Adi to protect his life. Here he awaited Divine instruction as to whither he might be required to emigrate. The Pilgrimage days came and he called on each one of the clans that had flocked there from all parts of Arabia. But whichever gathering he addressed, explaining Islamic principles, Abu Lahab would keep by him, telling the people not to believe him; for he was a heretic and wanted to overthrow the spiritual sway of the *"Lat"* and the *"Uzza."* Consequently he could attract little attention. Some of the clans harshly rejected him. But he did not lose heart. One tribe expressed a liking for his teachings, but pleaded their weakness to renounce their ancestral religion all at once. Another put him a question whether in the event of his triumph, they would have a share in the kingdom he might achieve, should they join hands with him. In reply, the Prophet told them that it rested entirely with God to bestow kingdom on whomsoever He thought fit. The incident, though trivial, speaks volumes for the Prophet's sincerity of purpose. If personal ascendancy were the object of his efforts, as so often alleged, what prevented him from winning over a whole clan, by just holding out a promise to them? But the fact is that the achievement of temporal power was never the goal of his endeavours. His heart was burning within him at the

degenerate state of man. Man's elevation in the scale of humanity was the one purpose of his life. He was eagerly looking to Divine help, which, he had not the shadow of a doubt, must be forthcoming, but when, he could not tell.

While thus preaching Islam to the various clans at the pilgrimage time, the Prophet happened to meet a few men of the Khazraj, a clan of Medina. After ascertaining who they were, he asked them if they were from among the associates of the Jews, to which they replied in the affirmative. Then he communicated the message of Islam to them. Having relations with the clans of Aus and Khazraj, and having lived in Medina which contained a considerable Jewish element in its population, they had already heard that the time of the appearance of the Promised Prophet as prophesied in the Jewish scriptures, was quite at hand. Thus the claim of the Prophet to be *that Prophet* was not altogether a surprise to them. What with the intrinsic beauty of the teachings of Islam which the Prophet explained to them, and what with their expectation of the advent of that Prophet, the conviction that he was indeed the Prophet went home to these visitors. Consequently all the six accepted Islam. This came about in the tenth year of the Call. On their return to Medina, much enthusiasm concerning the new faith prevailed there and the Prophet's name became a household word. A considerable number joined the fold of Islam, and a dozen of them went over to Mecca next year to perform the pilgrimage. These swore allegiance to the Prophet, at a place known as 'Aqaba, in the following words: "We will not set up any associates with Allah. We will not steal, nor commit for-

nication, nor kill our offspring, nor bring false accusations against others. We will not disobey the Prophet in anything that is right." This goes by the name of the First Pledge of 'Aqaba.

Mus'ab-bin-'Umair was deputed by the Prophet to instruct them in the teachings of Islam. As a result of Mus'ab's efforts, Islam spread in Medina by rapid strides. Headmen from among the Aus and the Khazraj embraced the faith, so that at the next Pilgrimage season as many as seventy-three men and two women visited Mecca. The Prophet met them, one night, at the same place—'Aqaba. 'Abbas, his uncle, who was bearing him company, though yet a non-believer, thus opened the conversation: "You are aware of the position Muhammad occupies amongst us. So far we have been protecting him from his enemies. He is quite safe and respected here. But now you wish him to accompany you to your town and live with you there. If you believe you will fulfil the covenant on which you wish to take him there, and pledge to shield him in every way, you are at liberty to undertake the responsibility. If, however, you think you will not be able to protect him, better give him up from this very moment. And mind you, you are welcome to take him along with you, provided you are prepared to withstand the united opposition of both the Arabs and the Gentiles." The Medinites, who came to be known as *Ansar* in the history of Islam, replied that they were ready to swear allegiance to the Prophet just as it might please the latter. Thereupon the Prophet recited a passage from the Holy Qurán, delivered a brief sermon and then said: "I demand allegiance of you to the effect that you would defend me against my enemies, just as you

defend your wives and children." On this, the chief among them, Bara-bin-Ma'rur, placing his hand on the Prophet's, said that they all swore allegiance to him on that point. This done, the Prophet appointed twelve of them as their chiefs.

It is thus evident that the Prophet went over to Medina on the invitation of the Medinites themselves. It was customary in Arabia that whenever a member of a particular clan joined another, they would pledge themselves to protect him; for, as a rule, a clan was responsible only for the protection of its own particular members. It also transpires from the event that the Prophet knew full well, as well as 'Abbas, that even in Medina, the Meccans would allow him no rest. It was therefore necessary to have the Ansar's pledge to defend the Prophet in the event of an attack by the enemy. The apprehension was justifiable; the Meccans had already given ample proofs of their malice by going all the way long to Abyssinia in pursuit of Muslim emigrants. This is known as the Second Pledge of 'Aqaba, which took place in the twelfth year of the Call. The understanding arrived at, and the allegiance sworn, being strictly confidential, its knowledge was confined to the few Muslims and 'Abbas. Even the non-Muslims of Medina did not know what exactly had happened. The Meccans, therefore, could get no information even from them. But when the pilgrimage was over, and people departed from Mecca, the news became known; for the Prophet himself was not keen about the secrecy. The Meccans went out in pursuit of the Medinite caravan, but could not overtake it. They got hold of two men, one of whom escaped, while the other, Sa'd-bin-'Ubada, was dragged all the way back to Mecca. But Sa'd had once done a kindly

office to some Meccans at Medina, and on their intercession he was let go. Thereafter the companions emigrated to Medina, in small parties, in perfect secrecy from the Meccans. At last the time came when the Prophet was left at Mecca in the company of but two of his companions, Abu Bakr and 'Ali, all the rest having reached Medina. The event throws further light on the implicit faith which the Prophet had in God. The bitterness of the Meccans' enmity was daily growing in intensity. The fact that Islam was taking root in Medina added fuel to the flame of their wrath. Almost all alone in the midst of his deadly foes, the Prophet was exposed to great danger. Nevertheless he was not so anxious on his own account as on that of his companions, whom he sent off to a place of safety, himself staying behind in the midst of his blood-thirsty enemies. On all sides he was hemmed in by such enemies, as had grown all the fiercer at the migration of the Muslims to Medina and their securing a firm footing there. This affords a sure evidence as to how deep-rooted the Prophet's faith in Divine protection was. He could have betaken himself to Medina before any other. No one of his friends would have had the least reason to grumble at such a course, for everybody knew that the safety of their faith, Islam, for which they were prepared to sacrifice their all, was bound up with that of the Prophet. But his deep love for his companions caused him greater anxiety on their account than on his own. Thus he removed them all to Medina, himself remaining at Mecca, in the midst of deadly foes, thereby displaying his anxiety for the safety of his comrades, and his firm conviction in the Divine promise concerning his personal safety.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FLIGHT

> "If you will not aid him, Allah certainly aided him when those who disbelieved expelled him, he being the second of the two, when they were both in the cave, when, he said to his companion: 'Grieve not, surely Allah is with us.'"
>
> (The Holy Qurán, IX, 40.)

TIME rolled by. The thirteenth year of the Call set in, and the Prophet, with Abu Bakr and 'Ali for his only companions, was left in Mecca, in the midst of his enemies. All the rest of his comrades, bidding farewell to their hearths and homes, had taken shelter either in Abyssinia or Medina. But the scene of the Prophet's utter helplessness was yet to come. When left in this state, Abu Bakr would often ask him to emigrate to Medina; but God, he replied, had not yet commanded him to do so. In this too, there was a Divine purpose at work, which was made manifest by the final decision of the Quraish. Up till then, individual efforts to make away with the Prophet had been made, and all had failed. Bitter opposition had been offered, and severe persecution inflicted. But a drop was yet needed to fill the cup of the Meccans' crimes to the brim. At last the hour came. Finding the Prophet almost all alone, they held a big conference in the *"Dar-un-Nadwa,"* or the House of the Assembly, where all sorts of national affairs were discussed and settled. The chiefs of the Quraish met there to deliberate over what might be done with the Prophet. Some thought he should be fettered, thrown

into a cellar, and starved to death. But this was open to the objection that his companions, gaining strength some time, might effect his release. Another proposed that he should be exiled. But it was apprehended in this case, that wherever he might be sent, he might win over the people there with his impressive teachings, and, attaining strength, might some day overcome the Quraish. Abu Jahl, at length, came forward with the proposal that strong and stout youths of noble lineage should be selected, one from each of the Quraishite clans, and be equipped with sharp swords. They should fall upon the Prophet, all in a body. Thus no particular clan would be held accountable for his murder. The Banu Hashim would therefore have to content themselves with blood-money instead of vengeance. This was unanimously agreed to. While the Quraish were thus maturing their plans, Divine revelation informed the Prophet of their foul intent, requiring him not to remain in his bed that night. Sending for 'Ali, he informed him of the Divine injunction, and told him to keep in his bed in place of himself; for he had many a trust in his custody which he ('Ali) should duly make over to the respective owners the following morning, and then follow him (the Prophet) to Medina. What a firm confidence in his integrity, notwithstanding such a strong opposition, public trusts were still entrusted to his charge. And for this express purpose he commissioned 'Ali to stay behind, whereas Abu Bakr was informed to make necessary preparations for the flight; for the Divine behest had been received. Abu Bakr eagerly enquired if he might accompany him. On being told that he should, he burst into tears, out of excessive joy. But why at all such intense pleasure at

the prospect of hardships and troubles? Only because he would be in the company of him for whom he was impatiently eager to sacrifice his all. Abu Bakr had already arranged for two camels, in anticipation of this hour. All other necessaries being forthwith provided, an appointment was made between him and the Prophet. Presently after dusk, the body of the armed men, drawn up from among the Quraishite tribes, laid siege to the Prophet's house, ready to fall upon him as soon he should venture out. It was against the Arab sense of chivalry to kill any one within the four walls of his house. 'Ali, however, who was to return deposits, was lying in the Prophet's bed. This gave the Quraish the ostensible impression that the Prophet was there and lulled them to a sense of security that their victim was well in their hand. Meanwhile, the Prophet, perceiving it was dark enough and trusting in the protecting hand of Allah, who had all these twelve years preserved him in the midst of his enemies, dashed right through his would-be murderers and went to Abu Bakr's, as pre-arranged. Both set out for Medina and reached a certain cave known as the cave of *"Saur,"* at a distance of three miles from Mecca. Abu Bakr went in first, cleaned it and closed the holes that he could feel in the dark cave. Then the Prophet followed in. The two caves thus occupy an important position in the history of Islam. It was in the cave of *"Hira"* that Divine Call first came to the Holy Prophet. Now it was in the cave of *"Saur"* that Islam was taking a new birth. The Flight is a red-letter day in the annals of Islam, so much so that the Muslim calendar begins from this time. Thus, it may be said that Islam sprang from these two caves.

Next morning, at daybreak, the Quraish were amazed to find 'Ali getting out of the Prophet's bed. Careful search was made on all sides. Large prizes were offered. A tracking party, following the footprints of the fugitives, reached right up to the mouth of the cave. Abu Bakr, hearing the sound of their footsteps, grieved within himself, not on his own account, but for one whose life was dearer to him than his own. A critical moment! The sword of the blood-thirsty enemy is hanging on their heads. Just a peep inside, and the inmates are sure to be cut into pieces. In such a situation the bravest of hearts may sink, and the calmest of minds may be bewildered. The enemy is intent upon their murder. Death is staring them in the face. There is no way of escape. There is no earthly protection left. In this extremely critical hour of uttermost helplessness, these are the words that come out of the Prophet's lips, "Do not be grieved, for surely Allah is with us"—words bespeaking a heart perfectly peaceful, and tranquil. Surely this could not be a voice from within. For the heart of a mortal human being, as the Prophet was, could not by itself preserve such an imperturbed state, under circumstances so inordinately perilous. It was not the voice from within, but the voice from above, from Allah, the Lord of all, come to console and compose a heart afflicted in His path. And who but the All-knowing God could tell that notwithstanding their reaching the very mouth of the cave, the enemy would still be unable to get at them?

For full three days the Prophet remained in the cave. Abu Bakr's son used to bring them news of all that went on in the town. His daughter, Asma, used to bring them

food. His servant, 'Amir-bin-Fuhaira, while tending his goats, would drive them up to the mouth of the cave and milk them for its inmates. At last when the search was over, and all was clear, they came out on the fourth day. They took one Abdullah-bin-Uraiqit, a non-Muslim, as their guide. 'Amir also mounted behind Abu Bakr on the same camel. When on the way, the heat grew scorching, they halted to take rest. Abu Bakr, cleaning the ground in the shade of a rock, spread his mantle for the Prophet to lie down upon, and went off in search of some food. Coming across a Bedouin tending his goats, he cleaned the mamma of a goat, milked her in a clean pot and then covering it with a piece of cloth, brought it to the Prophet. The Prophet's companions knew how he loved cleanliness. The Quraish had announced that whosoever should take hold of the Prophet should have a hundred camels as a reward. Among those that were on the look-out for him, in order to win the prize, there was one, Suraqa-bin-Malik by name. A certain man gave him the news that he had seen three mounted persons on their way to Medina. Suraqa was a strongly built man. Without letting anybody know, he put on his armour, mounted on a very swift horse, and went out in pursuit of them. On the way the horse stumbled, and he fell down. On drawing lots to divine whether he should continue the chase or not, as it was customary to do so on such occasions, he found the reply in the negative. Disregarding the omen he resumed the chase, but the same stumbling and the same forbidding lot followed. Again he jumped on horseback and galloped on till he got close to the Prophet, and was about to shoot an arrow at him, when

the horse stumbled once more, its feet this time sinking deep into the sand. "Then it transpired to me," Suraqa is reported to have recounted the incident later on, "that it was pre-ordained that the Prophet's cause should triumph." Abandoning the intention of murder, he came to the Prophet with a penitent heart, begged his forgiveness, asking not to be taken to task for his offence when the Prophet should come to power. The Prophet gave him in writing the promise asked for. Pen and ink were always kept at hand, in order to readily put down Divine revelation as soon as it was received. He also gave Suraqa the happy news that the time would come when he would be wearing the gold bangles of the ruler of Persia. This was a wonderful vision of the event that was to come about twenty-four years later—an event far beyond the imaginative faculty of man, especially in the case of one fleeing for his very life. In this state of helplessness, with his life hanging in the balance, the Prophet gets the happy news of the kingdom of the Chosroes of Persia coming into his possession. The words then and thus uttered found fulfilment during the regime of 'Umar's Caliphate, when at the fall of Persia, Suraqa was sent for and decorated with the bangles of the Chosroes.

The marvellous steadfastness of the Prophet, displayed in the midst of such overwhelming perils, was due to the Divine revelations that came down every now and then to cheer him up. "Verily, He that enjoined the Qurán upon thee shall bring thee back to Mecca,"[1] was another consolation which he received in the course of his flight to Medina. In fact, the emigration was to

[1] 28 : 85.

him nothing unexpected. He had been informed long before that he would have to leave Mecca and that the rise of Islam was to commence from some other centre. The Holy Qurán abounds in prophecies to this effect. Just at the time when the storm of opposition was at its highest, and the helplessness of the Prophet at its uttermost, it was proclaimed that Islam must triumph in the long run, even though the opponents should exert themselves tooth and nail. The accounts of the previous prophets, the opposition they met with, and their ultimate success, as narrated in the Holy Qurán, were mostly revealed in this period of the Prophet's career, as a sort of consolation to sustain him in his troubles. A little before the flight, he had a vision that he had emigrated to a place, rich and fertile. It was no other than Medina, which is still famous for its gardens.

That the prosperity of Islam was bound up with the *Hijrat,* or the Flight, was well known to the early Muslims. Thus they looked upon this event as the birth of Islam, and Muslim calendar, as already observed, dates, not from the first Call in the cave of *Hira,* but from the time of the Prophet's flight. It was in the *Hijrat* that the climax of the Prophet's helplessness was reached. Therefore the Holy Qurán refers to this event as a testimony to the fact that the helping hand of God was at the back of Islam, which was also a guarantee for its ultimate success. If the Meccans did not help him, the Holy Qurán says, Allah did surely help him in the hour of his extreme helplessness, when he had to flee from Mecca, with but one companion.[1] The two had to take refuge in a cave, it goes on to say, but even there they

[1] 9 : 40.

were not safe. The pursuers following close on their heels, traced them up to the mouth of the cave. His companion felt grieved that they were overtaken. At such an embarrassing moment, he consoled his friend not to entertain any fear, for Allah was most surely with them. This implicit and deep-rooted faith in Divine help was in fact the very secret of his optimism under the most trying and depressing circumstances. Never did a word of despair or disappointment escape his lips. What a contrast! There was a prophet who, when confronted by such overpowering obstacles, uttered words of disappointment, saying he would rather join his forefathers. There was another who expressed similar despair in a state of extreme helplessness: *"Eli, Eli, Lama Sabaktani,"* (O my God, O my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?). But Muhammad, peace and blessings of God be on him, knew no despondency, no despair, no dismay. In crucial situations, his heart is all the more aglow with hope. In this hour of dire helplessness, when, humanly speaking, the very last shelter in the cave appears to have also been withdrawn, he exclaims with a heart full of hope and confidence, "Most surely Allah is with us."

During the Meccan period, extending over thirteen years, the Holy Prophet had to work in the very teeth of the bitterest opposition. His spiritual force produced about three hundred giants of spirituality, who never for a single moment wavered in their faith in him, stood by him in spite of excruciating tortures, bade farewell to their homes and their property, but did not desert him. The phenomenal metamorphosis brought about by him in the brief space of thirteen years, notwithstanding the united resistance of the whole nation, has won unwilling

appreciation, even from a critic like Sir William Muir, who thus draws a sketch of his companions:

"In so short a period, Mecca had, by this wonderful movement, been rent into two factions which, unmindful of the old landmarks of tribe and family, had arrayed themselves in deadly opposition one against the other. The Believers bore persecution with a patient and tolerant spirit, and though it was their wisdom to do so, the credit of a magnanimous forbearance may be freely accorded. One hundred men and women, rather than abjure their precious faith, had abandoned home and sought refuge, till the storm should be overpast, in Abyssinian exile. And now again a larger number, with the Prophet himself, were emigrating from their fondly-loved city with its sacred Temple, to them the holiest spot on the earth, and fleeing to Medina. There the same marvellous charm had within two or three years been preparing for them a brotherhood ready to defend the Prophet and his followers with their blood. Jewish truth had long sounded in the ears of the men of Medina; but it was not until they heard the spirit-stirring strains of the Arabian Prophet that they too awoke from slumber, and sprang suddenly into a new and earnest life. The virtues of his people may be described in the words of Mahomet himself:

"The servants of the Merciful are they that walk upon the earth softly, and when the ignorant speak unto them, they reply peace.

"They that spend the night worshipping their Lord, prostrate and standing;

"And who say,—O our Lord! turn away from us the torment of Hell; verily, from the torment thereof there is no release. Surely it is an evil abode and resting place.

"Those that when they spend are neither profuse nor niggardly, but take a middle course; —

"Those that invoke not with God any other god; and slay not a soul that God had forbidden, otherwise than by right; and commit not fornication; . . .

"They who bear not witness to that which is false; and when they pass by vain sport, they pass it by with dignity.

"They who, when admonished by the revelations of the Lord, fall not down as if deaf and blind;

"Who say, O our Lord! Grant us of our wives and children such as shall be a comfort unto us, and make us examples unto the pious."

As a matter of fact these, as well as hundreds of other verses in the Holy Qurán, which depict the characteristics of the virtuous, do not draw an imaginary picture. They set forth a true description of the lives of the Prophet's companions. It was the soul force of a single personality that wrought this miraculous transformation. In a marvellously short time, hundreds of people, sunk in vice and superstition, given to the most debased forms of idolatry and fettered in the shackles of the dirtiest and most cruel social customs, were uplifted and raised to the heights of morality. He breathed a new life into them, so that the principles of truth, of virtue, of doing good to fellow-men, which they once accepted, they never parted with, even though harassed in a most terrible manner. He infused into them a sense of human dignity and responsibility. Here indeed was the greatest benefactor of humanity.

CHAPTER XIV

THE NEW ERA

(Early days at Medina)

> "Surely those who believed and fled (from their homes) and struggled hard in Allah's way with their property and their souls, and those who gave shelter and helped—these are the guardians of each other . . ."
>
> (The Holy Qurán, VIII, 72.)

THE Prophet and the party accomplished in eight days the journey to Medina, which usually takes eleven days, and arrived there on the 12th of Rabi' I, in the 13th year of his mission, corresponding to June 28 A.D. 622. News of his disappearance from Mecca had reached there before him, but his three days' hiding in the cave was known to no one. The city had been in eager expectation of his arrival. Each morning some of the devotees would go out for miles on the road to Mecca to watch the appearance of their master. The tedious hours of impatient expectancy were at last over, and the illustrious visitor appeared on the horizon of Medina. At a distance of three miles from the city lies the habitation known as Quba. It is considered as the suburbs of Medina. Here dwelt several families from among the *Ansar* or the helpers, of which that of 'Amru-bin-'Auf was the most distinguished. Before entering the city, the Prophet accepted his invitation and stopped at Quba. A number of the *Muhajirin,* i. e. the Emigrants, were also putting up here. Muslims from the city flocked to Quba in crowds to meet their revered leader. For fourteen days the Prophet stayed here. 'Ali too joined him at this place. A mosque was built here, the first mosque in the history

of Islam, known as the mosque of Quba. It is of this mosque that the Holy Qurán speaks in the Chapter IX as "the Mosque founded on piety."[1] The Prophet and the companions erected it with their own hands, all working as ordinary workmen and labourers. This was followed by his entry into the city of Medina, which was wearing a look of jubilation all round. People came out to greet him, clad in their gayest attire. Women climbed to the tops of their houses, and sang in chorus to welcome their noble guest. Everyone was desirous that he should stop at his house. Slackening the reins of his camel, he let her have her own way. Wherever she should stop, he said to the eager crowds around him, there would he lodge. The camel moved on till she reached an open space in front of Abu Ayyub's house, where she halted. The courtyard belonged to two orphan boys. They offered it gratis for the erection of a mosque, but the Prophet did not like to have it free. They had therefore to accept the price. The first thing done was the construction of a mosque here, the Prophet and his comrades working at it with their own hands. Each looked upon this labour of love as a proud privilege and, whilst thus busy, all chanted in a chorus after the Prophet, "O Lord! There is no felicity, but the felicity of the Hereafter; O Lord! help the Helpers and the Refugees."

The mosque was a monument of thorough simplicity—walls made of mud bricks, the roof supported by trunks of palm-trees, and covered over with the leaves and twigs of the same. As such, it could not keep out rain water, which would make the unpaved floor all muddy. To remove this difficulty, the floor was strewn

[1] 9 : 109.

with gravel. In a corner of the courtyard, a sort of a platform with a shed was raised to accommodate those having no home or family. Those who lived there were known as the Residents of the *Suffa* or platform. This was, so to speak, a sort of seminary attached to the mosque; for these people devoted their time to the study of religion. Adjoining the mosque were erected two apartments for the household of the Prophet.

While in Mecca, the Muslims could not say their prayers openly in congregation. Now that the peaceful conditions of Medina permitted of holding prayers publically, various ways, as to how to summon the faithful to prayer at the fixed hours, were one day considered. The same night, 'Umar had seen a vision to the effect that a certain man was repeating the words "God is the greatest, God is the greatest" and so forth—the full text of the Muslim call to prayer, since in vogue. Next morning he narrated his vision to the Prophet. Another of the companions, too, had had exactly the same vision. This was approved by the Prophet as the call to prayer. The first Friday congregation prayer was held here on the day when the Prophet left Quba and entered into the city of Medina.

Prayers, being thus regulated, the Prophet next turned to the question of providing for the Refugees. Most of them, while in Mecca, lived in ease and plenty, but they had to leave their wealth and property all behind. So the Prophet established a brotherhood between the Helpers and the Refugees—a brotherhood unique in the history of the world, and in respect of the sincerity of the fraternization. Each of the Refugees was bound with one of the Helpers in a bond of brotherhood. The fellow-

feeling and love on which this new brotherhood was founded, were practised in a most wonderful way. Each one of the Helpers taking a brother Refugee home with him, placed full half of his house at his disposal, and equally divided all his goods and chattels with him. The Helpers were an agricultural people, and wished to divide their farms equally with their brethren. The Refugees, were tradesmen by profession, quite unused to farming. On realising this the Helpers said they would do the whole labour themselves and give half the produce to the Refugees. So strong, in short, was this new tie, that it surpassed even the blood-tie relations between two real brothers. When either of the couple thus joined passed away, his property was inherited, not by his brother-in-blood, but by his brother-in-faith. But the Holy Qurán forbade that the tie should have such a far-reaching effect, and enjoined the inheritance to go in the natural course to the blood-relations.[1]

If such was the genuine sacrificial spirit with which the Helpers embraced their brethren in faith, the Refugees too did not take undue advantage of their sympathy. One 'Abdur Rahman-bin-'Auf, when offered half of everything owned by his brother Helper, expressed his gratitude for the kindness, and asked him only to show him the way to the market and he would manage his own living, and in a short time he developed a flourishing business of his own. Similarly, the rest of the Refugees also took to trade. Those who could find nothing to set their hand to, would work as ordinary porters, thereby not only maintaining themselves, but also sparing something to contribute towards the *Bait-*

[1] 8 : 76.

ul-Mal or the Public Treasury, to be expended on communal welfare. Before long, their business flourished to such an extent that the merchandise caravans of some of them consisted of seven hundred camels each. There was a time—a time of want—when, on the arrival of a guest, the Prophet, finding no provisions in his own house, asked Abu Talha, one of the companions to entertain him. On going home with the guest, Abu Talha found that the food was hardly enough for his own children. To avoid the awkward situation, light was put out, and whatever meal there was, was served to the guest, Abu Talha and his wife, who had to bear him company as hosts, taking nothing but only showing by the movements of their hands and mouths, as though they were also partaking of the food. The food being just enough for the guest, the whole family went without any. Then, there also came, by Allah's grace, the hour of plenty and prosperity and the Muslims began to live a comfortable life. But under both of these fluctuations of fortune, they acquitted themselves admirably. Neither in the state of indigence did they ever grumble, nor in the hour of affluence did they squander away their wealth. They spent it in the way of Allah—in helping the poor, the needy, and the orphans, and the Residents of the *Suffa*, whose sole occupation was to attend the whole day long to the teachings of the Prophet and spend their nights in praying to Allah. Out of these sprang up the band of religious teachers and preachers who carried the torch of Islam far and wide, to different countries and different people. The well-known Abu Hurairah, through whom a vast number of the Prophet's sayings have come down to us, was also one of these. As they had no means of liveli-

hood, the well-to-do among the Muslims used to invite them to take food with them. It is recorded that Sa'd alone used to take home as many as eighty.

The third important matter which the Prophet addressed himself to was to establish friendly relations between the various tribes inhabiting Medina. The Jews wielded a considerable power here. They used to enter into alliance with the tribes of Aus and Khazraj, and to take part in their internecine warfare. It appears they were Arabs by descent, but formed a distinct unit by reason of their adoption of Judaism. They were subdivided into three clans, the Banu Qainuqa', the Banu Nazir and the Banu Quraiza. The other inhabitants of the town were the Aus and the Khazraj, always at war with each other. Of the two chief clans of the Jews, the Banu Quraiza were the allies of the Aus, while the Banu Nazir joined the Khazraj. Now, it so happened that the major portion of the Khazraj and the Aus embraced Islam. So the Prophet concluded a pact between the Muslims and the Jews. The main terms were as follows:— Firstly, the Muslims and the Jews shall live as one people. Secondly, each one of the parties shall keep to its own faith, and neither shall interfere with that of the other. Thirdly, in the event of a war with a third party, each was bound to come to the assistance of the other, provided the latter were the party aggrieved and not the aggressors. Fourthly, in the event of an attack on Medina, both shall join hands to defend it. Fifthly, peace, when desirable, shall be made in consultation of each other. Sixthly, Medina shall be regarded as sacred by both, all bloodshed being forbidden there. Seventhly, the Prophet shall be the final court of appeal in case of a dispute.

CHAPTER XV

THE BATTLE OF BADR

"Verily, Allah assisted you at Badr, while you were weak."
(The Holy Qurán, III, 122.)

HAVING settled at Medina, the Muslims were no longer molested in the observance of their religion. Mosques were erected, call to prayer was freely made; but let it not be taken to imply that enmity to Islam had ceased to exist. While the Muslims enjoyed perfect religious liberty within the four walls of Medina, the fire of malice kept smouldering in the same proportion in the hearts of the Meccans. Hostility went on growing both in intensity and extent. When even a small band had emigrated sometimes back to Abyssinia, the Quraish were too jealous to leave them in peace there, and followed them right up to the court of King Negus to bring about their destruction. Now that the Prophet and all the Muslims were safely settled at Medina, and were steadily gaining in power and influence, the Quraish could not remain inactive.

Abdullah-bin-Ubayy, an important personality of Medina, possessed immense influence there. Before the immigration of the Prophet, the people of Medina were thinking of making him their over-lord. Naturally enough, when the Prophet arrived there to eclipse his personality, he felt the sting of jealousy and maintained a hostile attitude towards the Muslims. The Quraish also instigated him to expel the Muslims from there. But a large

number of his own tribesmen had already joined the fold of Islam. An attempt to offer an open resistance to the Prophet might lead to a civil war among his own people. Disappointed in Abdullah-bin-Ubayy, the Quraish began to excite the inhabitants of the strip of land lying between Mecca and Medina. Being the custodians of the sacred House of Ka'ba, they commanded the respect of the whole of Arabia. They were thus in a position to exert considerable influence upon the tribes. The success of the Quraish propaganda among these people set the Muslims once more on their guard. On all sides they were hemmed in by enemies, and even within the four walls of Medina a deep undercurrent of opposition, set in motion by Abdullah-bin-Ubayy, was in progress. Notwithstanding the compact, no confidence could be reposed in the Jews. Nor could Abdullah-bin-Ubayy be relied upon. The Muslims, therefore, felt great concern with regard to their safety. Attack was apprehended every moment from without and treachery from within.

Small detachments of the Quraish used to go out on marauding expeditions and scour the country right up to the outskirts of Medina. Once, one such party lifted camels from the very pastures of the town. In fact, ever since the Emigration, they were anxiously looking forward for an opportunity to cause trouble and extirpate Islam at the point of the sword. They had made every preparation for an incursion upon Medina. The situation called for all vigilance on the Muslims' part. Divine revelation had also been received, permitting the unsheathing of the sword in self-defence. The words of the Holy Qurán in this connection are significant enough, and deserve the close attention of critics, who stigmatise

Islam, in season and out of season, as the religion of the sword. The Holy Qurán says: "Permission is granted to those against whom war is waged, because they have been tyrannized."[1] And elsewhere: "Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you and do not transgress the limits (of war)."[2] Thus warfare is restricted by two conditions. It must not be waged but in self-defence, and secondly it must cease as soon as the necessity for it is no more. Under the behests of the Holy Qurán therefore, a Muslim cannot play the part of an aggressor in a battle. He must wait till the enemy has struck the first blow. This much as to the commencement of fighting, but subsequently at every stage in the course of action he has to observe perfect self-restraint so that if the enemy should show inclination towards peace, he is bound to meet it more than half way, suspending hostilities there and then. He must not transgress the limits.

Thus as a measure of self-defence the Prophet had to adopt certain ways and means by way of precaution. It was necessary, under the circumstances, to obtain accurate information as to the plans and movements of the Quraish. Establishment of friendly relations with the various Bedouin tribes in the vicinity of Medina was also urgently called for. With these ends in view, the Prophet despatched small reconnaissance parties to keep an eye on the enemy movements, as well as to approach certain tribes to secure their neutrality. Besides, such a precautionary measure would perhaps serve as a check on the aggressive designs of the enemy. The Muslims, they should realise, were not off their guard,

[1] 22 : 39. [2] 2 : 190.

and they would consequently think twice before taking the fateful step. This would also alarm them concerning their Syrian trade, to which, in fact, they owed the whole of their prosperity. Situated as Medina was, on the trade route from Mecca to Syria, disruption of relations with the Muslims would seriously endanger their caravans. This, it was hoped, would be effective enough to keep their hostile intentions in abeyance. This exactly was the warning given them by Sa'd-bin-Mu'az, one of the Helpers on the occasion of Pilgrimage. On Abu Jahl's threatening him that if he were not in the protection of such and such a man, he would not escape alive, Sa'd met him with the rebuff that they would find their trade route to Syria obstructed, if they prohibited the Muslims from performing the pilgrimage. The parties thus sent out had strict orders to abstain from picking up quarrels.

In consequence of the negotiations referred to above, several of the neighbouring tribes entered into agreement with the Muslims, idolatrous like the Meccans as they were. These pacts, it must be noted, were of a purely defensive character. The terms of one, for instance, which will speak for themselves, were as follows: "This is the script of Muhammad to the Banu Hamza. Their life and property shall be safe. Should some enemy attack them, they shall be assisted by the Muslims, unless it is a religious war. They shall also come to the Prophet's help when called upon."

It so happened that about the end of a month, Jamadi II, 2 A.H., one such party was sent out under Abdullah-bin-Jahsh. They were given sealed instructions, by the Prophet, requiring them not to open the

cover, until two days had passed. When opened as directed, after two days' march, it was found to contain the orders that the party should proceed to a certain place, Nakhla, and there gather information about the Quraish schemes. It was nothing more than just a precautionary measure, lest the enemy should fall upon the Muslims by surprise. There could be no other motive whatsoever, no intention of an attack on Mecca. The Muslims were much too weak to think of any such design. The duty of the preservation of the small Muslim brotherhood devolved upon the Prophet. And like a skilled general, he realized the importance of keeping a watch on enemy movements.

On reaching Nakhla, as directed in the sealed letter, Abdullah-bin-Jahsh came across a few Quraishite traders on their way back from Syria. In contravention of the express orders of the Prophet, he fell upon them, killing one, Abdullah-bin-Hazrami, and taking two captives. When the news reached the Prophet, he severely reprimanded Abdullah for transgressing his orders. The Quraish, who had been anxiously looking for an excuse, were thus afforded the long-awaited opportunity to give vent to their wrath. No great importance, under the then conditions of Arab society, could be attached to an accidental murder such as Ibn-i-Hazrami's. In fact, it was a commonplace accident, of daily occurrence. The usual course followed in all such cases was to demand blood-money. But the Quraish wanted a pretext with which to rouse the general populace against the Muslims and Ibn-i-Hazrami's murder furnished it. They took about two months in making the necessary preparations and fell upon Medina in the month of Ramazan in the

year 2 A.H. Thus came about what goes in the history of Islam by the name of the battle of Badr.

By a strange coincidence, a Quraishite trading caravan under the leadership of Abu Sufyan was, about this very time, on its way back from Syria. Before departure, Abu Sufyan sent word to Mecca to arrange for the protection of the caravan. This has led to the unwarranted conclusion that the Muslims wanted to waylay the caravan, and hence followed the battle of Badr. The idea is absolutely unfounded. This very caravan had on its way to Syria passed by Medina quite unmolested. Again, in all their attempts to rouse the people to the attack, and in all their preparations, the Quraish leaders never uttered a word as to the alleged insecurity of the caravan. The murder of Ibn-i-Hazrami was the only incident they made use of for arousing great excitement for vengeance. Besides, the caravan, deviating its course from the usual route, and passing along the coast, had safely reached Mecca, before the two armies met at Badr. It is thus absolutely baseless to impute any such motives to the Muslims. The long-standing anxiety of the Quraish to crush the growing power of Islam, was the only cause that led to the battle. The Muslims were in fact dragged into it. The very fact that the Muslim strength counted only 313, including boys, all poorly armed, shows that they could not much relish the idea of a battle against a force 1000 strong, fully equipped. The Holy Qurán thus depicts their state of mind, when they were called upon to stand up for their defence: "A party of the believers were surely averse. . . . As if they were being driven to death."[1] There were many, who looked upon

[1] 8 : 5.

it, it says, as a great hardship, thinking they were thrust into the very jaws of death. Nevertheless they had to strike a blow in self-defence. The Prophet summoned them together, explained the situation to them and they could not help taking the field against a foe bent upon striking a fatal blow at their very existence. The Helpers had promised to defend the Prophet only within the four walls of Medina, but now the situation required to meet the enemy before they should attack the town. Still, when the Prophet turned towards them to know their mind, he found them all ready to follow his lead and to stand by him under the severest trials. This small band of Muslims hastily recruited and ill-equipped, placing their reliance in Allah, marched out towards the road to Mecca, to check the onslaught of the Quraish. It was inadvisable to let the flames of fighting approach their homes at Medina. Reaching Badr, so called after a well of the same name, they found the Quraish army already encamped there. They did the same.

Numerically the Muslim force was hardly one third of the Quraish. Besides, the latter were composed of skilled veterans, while the Muslims had recruited even inexperienced youths. Therefore, neither in respect of number, nor in that of strength and skill, were the Muslims a match for the enemy. This caused the Prophet the deepest anxiety. Retiring into a small hut, set up for him, he addressed Allah with tearful eyes, saying: "O Allah, shouldst Thou suffer this small band of believers to perish this day, no one will be left on earth, to worship Thee and carry Thy message to the world." Having offered special prayers he came out of the hut with a ripple of smile on his face, and loudly recited

the Qurânic verse, revealed long since: "Soon shall the hosts be routed and they shall turn their backs."[1]

The Quraish, on the other side, were thoroughly equipped. In obedience to the Qurânic injunction, the Muslims desisted from advancing for an attack, until the enemy should strike the first blow. At last, three of the Quraish champions came forward and challenged an equal number from among the Muslims to meet them. It was the fashion in Arab warfare in those days that before the commencement of a general conflict between the opposing armies, single-handed combats were tried. The gauntlet was taken up by three from among the Muslims who stepped forward to meet them. And it so happened that all the three Quraish heroes were killed in the duels. This was followed by a few more duels, and then the fighting became general. The Quraish army fell upon the Muslims, but the latter firmly held to their position, and repulsed them. A remarkable phenomenon of Divine assistance came to pass. Almost all the Quraish chiefs, the ringleaders of the deadly campaign against Islam, were slain in action. Abu Jahl suffered death at the hands of two youths from among the *Ansar*. In all, seventy of the hostile army fell in the field. Seeing their chiefs fall, the rank and file were seized with utter confusion and took to flight. The Muslims pursued them, and took about seventy prisoners. On the Muslim side, the casualties were only fourteen.

The conflict of Badr presents a striking scene of Divine help, perhaps unique in one respect, in the annals of warfare. It does often happen, that an army having smaller numerical strength but otherwise well-equipped,

[1] 54 : 45.

composed of valiant soldiers, well-disciplined and skilled in the use of arms, defeats larger hosts, outnumbering it by far, but not possessing equal advantages. But what makes the battle of Badr so strikingly unique is the fact that every form of weakness on one side is ranged against every form of strength on the other. The Quraish army is three times as large as the Muslim one. The position taken up by the Quraish is advantageous. Their ranks comprise soldiers of fame, with whom fighting has been a lifelong profession. Equipment too is more than ample. Everyone is clad in full armour. They have a hundred horsemen as well as seven hundred camels. And what is the Muslim strength? Their number is one third of the enemy army. Their ranks are composed of a number of under-age youths, of Refugees of advanced age, and of some Medinite Helpers, in no way a match for the war-like Meccans. What is the number of horsemen and camels they can boast of? No more than two and seventy respectively. In respect of equipment, they have no comparison at all. Thus utter weakness is pitched against overwhelming might. But the Divine hand comes to the succour of the weak, inspiring them with strength—strength other than that of numbers, equipment or arms—and worldly might is routed. To this phenomenon the Holy Qurán invites attention in the following verse: "Indeed there was a sign for you in the two hosts which met together in encounter; one party fighting in the way of Allah, and the other unbelieving . . . and Allah strengthens with His aid whom he pleases; most surely there is a lesson in this for those who have eyes to see."[1]

[1] 3 : 12.

Those that were taken prisoner received kindly treatment at the hands of the Muslims, which impressed many of them with the nobility of Islamic spirit. One of them, when he accepted Islam later on, remembered with gratitude the treatment he had received in captivity. Those, he would recount, to whom he was entrusted, served to him the best of food in the house, the family contenting themselves with dates and other such-like eatables. Notwithstanding the fact that hostilities had not ceased, the prisoners of war were repatriated on receipt of ransom. The poor who could not afford to pay their ransom were let go free. Those who could read and write were required to teach ten children each, this being considered as ample ransom to secure them their liberty. To forego a big sum of 4000 Dirhams as ransom money per head and accept the teaching of reading and writing instead, furnishes an ample testimony to the value which learning had in the eyes of the Prophet. The vanquished foe was never treated harshly by him. This was the first opportunity for the Muslims after their long and bitter sufferings at the hands of the Quraish to wreak vengeance on them, if they chose. But how were they treated is well illustrated by the following incident. There was one among the captives, possessed of a remarkable force of eloquence which he used to exercise unsparingly while in Mecca, to arouse opposition to Islam. He was brought before the Prophet, and it was suggested that two of his teeth should be knocked out, as an appropriate punishment, to incapacitate him from stirring agitation against Islam. "If I disfigure any of his limbs," replied the Prophet, "God will disfigure mine."

The battle of Badr dealt on the one hand a smash-

ing blow to the power of the Quraish, while on the other, it strengthened the roots of Islam. Besides, it produced a marvellous effect on the Jews as well as the neighbouring Bedouin tribes. How could the Muslims overpower such large hosts, they thought within themselves, if they had not been strengthened by Divine aid? Then they were surprised to see how the worst and the most deadly enemies of Islam were picked out each and all, and slain. Did it not clearly point to the Divine hand at work? Another interesting fact in the battle of Badr was that just in the very field of action, the Prophet was on the one side praying to God with tearful eyes, while Abu Jahl, on the other, was also imploring God, to destroy whichsoever of the contending parties was responsible for the severance of blood-ties and the prolonged trouble. Even before marching out of Mecca, the Quraish had made a solemn prayer at the Ka'ba that God might be pleased to grant victory to those who were in the right.[1] Thus the result of the battle was, so to speak, a Divine judgment against wrong. Right received Divine support and triumphed. The enemy designs were shattered, while the Muslims saw in their destruction the fulfilment of the Divine promises held out to them all these twelve years, that truth was bound to prevail in the long run. Throughout the prolonged period of trials and hardships, they had received Divine consolation that all opposition would break down and Islam would come out triumphant. What they had implicitly believed, they now saw actually come to pass, and naturally enough, the righteousness of the cause of Islam became as manifest to them as daylight.

[1] 8 : 42.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BATTLE OF UHUD

> "And be not infirm, and be not grieving, and you shall have the upper hand if you are believers."
> (The Holy Qurán, III, 138.)

THE defeat at Badr was an ignominy which the Quraishite sense of honour would not leave unavenged. The contemptible little band of ill-equipped heretics had inflicted a crushing blow on them. Revenge was therefore the watchword all over Mecca. Most of the Quraishite chiefs having fallen at Badr, Abu Sufyan was elected as leader, and he solemnly pledged to avenge the disgrace of Badr. The profit of the caravan which had at the time of the battle of Badr returned from Syria, under the command of Abu Sufyan, was by general consent set aside to be devoted to the contemplated expedition of revenge. An army of 3000 soldiers was collected, full twelve months after the defeat at Badr, including two hundred armed cavalry, and seven hundred armed heroes. Women were also allowed to accompany the force, in order to rouse the spirits of the soldiers with their war-songs. Thus in the year 3 A.H. the army marched out towards Medina and on Thursday, the 9th of Shawwal, encamped at the foot of the Uhud, a hill three miles north of Medina. They took possession of the pastures of Medina; luxuriant crops were cut down to serve as forage for the horses, and camels were let loose to graze in the fields and devastate them.

The next day, Friday, the 10th of Shawwal, the Prophet summoned together his companions to discuss what was the best course to adopt. It was his habit to take counsel, before every great undertaking, with his friends. He related some of his visions. He saw that his sword was somewhat broken at the point. This was interpreted to portend some injury to his own person. He saw also that he had covered his body with a coat of mail. This was taken to signify that they should better keep within the fortifications of Medina. Another vision in which cows were seen being slaughterd was interpreted to mean damage to his people. On the strength of these visions, the Prophet was of opinion that they should not venture out to meet the enemy in open conflict, but rather stay within the four walls of Medina and repulse their onslaughts. Companions of age and mature judgment were all at one with him in this suggestion. Even 'Abdullah-bin-Ubayy, who had embraced Islam hypocritically after the battle of Badr, held the same view. But the majority, consisting chiefly of passionate youths, inclined towards giving the enemy a manly battle. Keeping within the walls, they argued, would carry an impression of their weakness and embolden the enemy. Moreover, it was shocking to their sense of self-respect to watch with complascence their fields being laid waste. Out of deference for the opinion of the majority, the Prophet yielded to their plan, and, putting on his armour, marched out of Medina about sunset, at the head of a party 1000 strong, among whom were only two horsemen and a hundred armed men. The night was spent at a short distance from the city, the march being resumed next morning early at dawn. But on coming within sight of the enemy, 'Abdullah-

bin-Ubayy deserted with his three hundred men, thus reducing the Muslims to only seven hundred to meet four times their number. Even these were by no means skilled in warfare. Their only strength lay in their enthusiasm for the defence of truth. The zeal had instilled even into the hearts of the aged the vigour and spirits of youth. The same was the case with those who were underage. It is related of a boy that, on being refused enlistment on the score of under-age, he stretched his body, standing on tip-toe to look taller. His zeal, after all, secured him a place in the ranks. Another of the same age stepped forward, asserting his claim to be enrolled. In a wrestling contest, he urged, he could throw his fellow down. He was given a chance to make good his pretensions and on succeeding in pulling him down, he was also taken in. An aged man, just on the eve of this earthly life, then came forward. "I am, O Prophet of Allah," he pleaded, "already on the verge of my grave. What a glory, should my life come to an end while striking a blow in the defence of Allah's Apostle!" The seven hundred were thus recruited, their lack of strength and skill being made up for by their intense zeal for the cause so dear to them. Advancing to encounter the three thousand strong, stout and well-equipped warriors, the Prophet, like a skilled general, took up a position of vantage on the field, with the rocks of Uhud to protect his rear, and in person drew up his men into ranks. There was, however, on one side an opening through the rocks which could give the enemy occasion to fall upon the Muslim ranks from the rear. Fifty archmen were therefore posted on the eminence at the mouth of the outlet, with strict orders

not to leave their posts on any account, whatever may be the fortune of the day. Whether the Muslims would be victorious or defeated, the archers were in no case to move an inch from their position.

Besides the women who accompanied the Quraish army to rouse their martial spirits, there was also a Christian monk, Abu 'Amir, to play a similar role. Once he used to live in Medina, where he was held in deep veneration by the people, for his pious and abstemious life. On the arrival of the Prophet at Medina he saw the Helpers accord him so warm a reception, as he could not bear. He was disgusted, and went over to Mecca. His presence in the Quraish ranks, he boasted, would by itself overawe the Medinites, who would surely desert the Muslim Refugees. Now that the two armies took the field, and faced each other, women came out first of all to the front of the Meccan army and used all their arts to rouse the spirits of the soldiers. Then Abu 'Amir made his appearane reminding the Helpers who he was. He was, however, received with contempt and was forced to retire.

After a course of duels, in which Hamza killed Talha, the Quraishite flag-bearer, the conflict became general. The Muslims fell furiously upon the enemy. Abu Dujana, a famous athlete and Hamza displayed prodigious valour. As they swept along, they put the Meccan ranks to confusion, dealing death on all sides. Hamza at length fell a victim to the javelin of a negro slave, Wahshi, hired by Hinda, Abu Sufyan's wife, for the express purpose. Yet the Muslims fought desperately. Seven Meccan flag-bearers fell one after another, till utter confusion seized them. At last they took to flight, the Muslims closely

pursuing them. Thus, once more the Muslims were on the point of securing a glorious victory over the Meccans. But there is, they say, many a slip between the cup and the lip. A single act of indifference to duty on the part of the Muslim archers posted at the point, where the surprise attack was apprehended, turned the scales against them. Beholding the Meccans put to flight, they asked their commander's permission to join the rest of the Muslim army in the enemy's pursuit. Notwithstanding his refusal, they quitted their position, which the Prophet had so strictly ordered them to hold to the last, Abdullah-bin-Jubair and a few others still keeping to their posts. Khalid, who had the command of the cavalry and who was keenly watching the situation, perceived the weak point, now left almost undefended. Losing no time, he wheeled round at the head of his two hundred men to the rear, and sweeping the few Muslim archers left at the opening, fell upon the Muslim army at a time when their line had become loose and irregular in consequence of their hot pursuit. The broken and fleeing ranks of the Meccans, seeing Khalid fall upon the Muslims from the rear, also turned back, and the handful of Muslims were thus pressed on both sides. The overwhelming numbers of the enemy would have utterly crushed them at the outset, had not a tactical precaution been taken beforehand by the Prophet. When drawing up his army in battle array, he, like a vigilant general, had taken good care to provide for an adverse turn of fortune. That particular position with the mountain at the back had been taken up with the express object of utilising it as a refuge, in the event of a disaster. While the Muslim army was busy pursuing the enemy, the

Prophet was keeping behind with Talha and Sa'd. No sooner did he see Khalid advance and take up the position deserted by the archers, than he perceived the critical nature of the danger to which the Muslim army was exposed. Two alternative courses were, under the circumstances, open to him to adopt—either to secure his own safety by betaking himself to a place of shelter, leaving his friends to their fate, or to call out to them at personal risk, in order to take them out of the danger. He chose the latter of the two. Finding them hard pressed, he shouted at the top of his voice: "Rally to me, I am the Apostle of Allah." As soon as the Prophet's voice reached their ears, they turned their faces, each and all, towards him, working their way through enemy ranks. But whereas the shout attracted the Muslims towards him, it also signalled his whereabouts to the enemy. He was the root cause of all the trouble. The sole object of the war was to get rid of him. In a moment he became the target of enemy attacks. But his companions, devoted heart and soul to him, defended his precious life at the cost of their own, falling one by one around him. In the meantime, Mus'ab-bin-'Umair, who resembled the Prophet in appearance, was slain. The news spread like wildfire that the Prophet had been killed. This caused still greater consternation in the already confused ranks of the Muslims. One of them was so deeply struck with grief that he could no more wield his sword. Another, Ans-bin-Nazr, was much surprised to see him stand listless. On enquiry he explained that it was no use fighting when the Prophet was dead. "Of what worth is life then," replied Ans, "if the Prophet is no longer in our midst. Let us fight on for the cause, which he fought for."

Thus cheering up one another and piercing through the enemy ranks, the companions mustered strong around their beloved Leader. By the time he had sustained serious wounds and fell down. His devoted friends fortified him, making a human wall around his person. The enemy bore down in all force upon this point. But the wall of Muslim soldiers proved invulnerable. A gap created by the fall of one would instantaneously be filled up by another rushing in to take his place. Recovering from the shock, the Muslims again closed their ranks and once more gave the enemy a good fight, meeting their attacks with good reprisals. Besides, they had now retreated to a position which defied all attempts at their dispersion. The Quraish exerted their utmost, and made repeated assaults, but they were repulsed every time. They lost all hope of smashing the Muslims, now once more rallied into a compact body. Abu Talha, the famous archer's shots kept pouring down on them at a tremendous speed. He broke three bows in the operation. Sa'd was also co-operating. He emptied the Prophet's quiver, and took heavy toll of the enemy. Besides, they were now more exposed to the arrows and stones of the Muslims, who held a position of advantage. Thus, partly because of the dexterous Muslim archery and their better position, and partly because of the reckless daring which the Quraish knew was so characteristic of the Muslims, they thought it advisable to retreat.

Thus frustrated in their attempts at the destruction of the Muslims, the Quraish indulged in the gratification of their passion of revenge on the field. Terrible acts of barbarity were committed on the slain. Their bodies were mutilated. Hinda tore out Hamza's liver

and chewed it; she strung his internal organs and garlanded herself. Abu Sufyan shouted from a distance, "Is Muhammad there among you?" The Prophet forbade a reply. Then he called aloud "Is Abu Bakr there among you?" No reply again. "Is 'Umar there among you?" He cried a third time, adding, "All of them are slain; if they were alive, they must have responded." 'Umar could no longer restrain himself. "O thou enemy of Allah," replied he, "they are all alive yet to bring woe unto thee." Then Abu Sufyan shouted "Glory to *Hubal!*" On this the Prophet asked 'Umar to reply, "Allah is the most High and the most Mighty." So long as it was a personal question, the Prophet cared little for Abu Sufyan's ravings, and would rather ignore them than give him a reply. But when the honour of Allah was involved, he could not keep quiet. Respect for His exalted name urged him to give Abu Sufyan a befitting retort. Again, the latter cried out: "the *'Uzza* is ours, the *'Uzza* is not yours" because you have no such god as the *'Uzza*. Again, at the bidding of the Prophet, 'Umar replied "Allah is our protector; there is none to protect you." Nevertheless the Prophet had a heart full of tender mercy even for the enemy. While arrows were being showered on him, he thus implored Allah in all humility: "O Allah, forgive my people, for they do not know."

Some of the Muslims, when they were once cut off from the rest, in the general confusion that seized the Muslim ranks on Khalid's surprise assault, could not make their way back to the main body, and left the field under the false impression that their army had been defeated. But their wives, on learning that they had left the Prophet in the field, threw dust at their faces. A

number of ladies made straight off towards the field, all enquiring about the welfare of the Prophet. They felt more anxious on his account than for their kith and kin. It is related that on being informed of the death of her father, a certain lady from among the Helpers simply recited the usual Qurânic verse: "For Allah we are, and to Him shall we return,"[1] and anxiously asked if the Prophet was safe. She was then told that her brother had also fallen. She repeated the same verse, but put the same question with the same concern on the Prophet's account. But yet another painful news—her husband too had been slain. With a deep sigh she uttered the same words, and on being informed that the Prophet was quite safe, all her grief disappeared. When she saw him with her own eyes, she exclaimed with immense relief, "Now that you are alive, every calamity seams small." With the same dignified resignation, all other ladies bore the shock of their slain and mutilated relations. Some ladies, 'Aysha being among them, had kept with the army on the battlefield and given drink to the wounded, and nursed them while the battle was raging. With the retreat of the Muslims to the cover of the mountain, Medina was left entirely exposed. But Abu Sufyan and his hosts had no courage to turn thither. They fared no better than the Muslims, and consoled themselves with the retreat of the latter. They had not the courage to pursue hostilities to a finish, which, they had good reasons to fear, might mean a disaster to them. In hot haste, they turned to Mecca, marching off several miles the same day. On the way they wondered if they could fairly claim to have been victorious. They had no

[1] 2 : 156.

spoils of victory to show to their people. They had not a single prisoner of war; was that a victory? The Muslim army was still in possession of the field; was that a victory? They had not been able to overrun Medina, undefended as it was; was that a victory? These were the various thoughts that occurred to them. Suggestions were made that they should return and decide the issue, but they could not summon courage to do so. While thus wavering, news reached them that the Prophet was on their heels with his army. The pluck of the Muslims on this occasion has been spoken of in the Qurán in highly commendatory terms.[1] Despite so many troubles and afflictions, it says, when the Prophet called on them to come out to chase the enemy, they cheerfully responded. They followed the enemy, the very next day, right up to a place, Hamra-ul-Asad, eight miles from Medina. But Abu Sufyan, thinking discretion to be the better part of valour, marched off with his army, as soon as the news of the Muslims' pursuit reached him.

It betrays a lack of knowledge of historical facts to conclude that the Muslims were defeated at the battle of Uhud. It is no doubt true that the Muslims sustained a heavy loss, but it is no less true that the Quraish had to turn back disappointed. Does history record a single instance of victory, at which the vanquished foe kept to the field, and the victorious army marched off homeward without taking a single captive; at which the fallen foe had the pluck to pursue the victors the next day only a few hours after the battle, and the victors, on the contrary, took to flight on hearing of the chase? No doubt the Muslims had to pass through crucial junctures

[1] 3 : 153.

in this battle. The Prophet in person was severely wounded, and even the rumour went forth that he had been slain, and with that it was thought that Islam had, as a matter of course, come to an end. But all this was necessary to come to pass in the life of the Prophet to serve as a beacon of hope and courage for the succeeding generations of Muslims, lest in times of distress and disappointment they should ever lose heart. The enemy might make jubilations over what appears to him as the overthrow of Islam, but the Muslim heart must rest at ease. Islam is imperishable. Every calamity, however great, must turn out to be its real triumph in disguise.

CHAPTER XVII

THE ARAB TRIBES AND THE MUSLIMS

> "Thou hast no concern in the affair whether He turns to them mercifully or chastises them, for surely they are unjust." (The Holy Qurán, III, 127.)

THE battle of Uhud had a very disquieting effect on the Arab tribes in general. It stirred them to open hostilities against Islam. They felt convinced that the Quraish meant to destroy the faith or else they would not have undergone the trouble and cost of undertaking such a big expedition. Thus assured of the Quraishites' resolve, the malice of the several tribes, so far suppressed, began to manifest itself. They thought the Muslims' cause was ruined, and they must not lag behind to participate in the honour of its overthrow. Here, there, and everywhere, tribes made preparations to fall upon the Muslims.

Moral and spiritual culture of the people was no doubt the sole mission of the Prophet. Warfare formed no part of his programme of life. This great object could be achieved but through the small noble band he had prepared for the purpose. Now that the very existence of those who were intended to devote themselves to the spiritual purification of humanity was in danger, was it not his duty to adopt all possible measures to safeguard them? The interest of the ideal he had set before him called for resolute action. Be-

sides, the Prophet was the head of the small community, and as such was responsible for their weal and woe. His position as their leader laid on him the obligation of looking after the good of his people. In this respect too, he is an example to those placed in authority over others. As demonstrated by that Perfect Exemplar for mankind, the leader of men must not accept his position merely for the pleasant privileges it affords, but must also face the irksome responsibilities it entails. It is his moral duty to think out ways and means to defend his people against aggression, and adopt measures conducive to their welfare. Had the Prophet no other record of brilliant achievements, this one great deed would have sufficed to entitle him to a unique position in human history. He found his people hemmed in on all sides by deadly foes. Their existence was, day and night, trembling in the balance. Through his foresightedness and his self sacrifice he rescued them from all perils, and enabled them to win the laurels of success. The formation of a nation comes under the category of great deeds in human history, and the stupendous obstacles under which the Prophet produced a mighty nation are unparalleled in the annals of nation-making.

As a result of the battle of Uhud, the Jewish communities of Medina, disregarding their agreement, entered into conspiracies with the Quraish to do injuries to the Muslims. On the other hand, the mischief of the hypocrites now became more open. They made it a point to cause trouble to the Faithful in every way. The neighbouring tribes had also resolved to strike a death-blow at Islam, thinking it was already on the verge of extinction. There was no security left for the Muslims,

neither within, nor without the city of Medina. Intelligence was daily received of an attack, now from this side, now from that. It was a very anscious time. The Muslims could not move about without arms. We learn from a report that they could not part with their arms even in the night time. The continuous strain at last exhausted their patience and they opened their hearts to the Prophet, stating how unbearable things had become. He used to comfort and console them, assuring them that the dawn of peace was at hand. He shared the strain and stress of these days of hardship in person, and took every pre-caution to avert the danger of attacks looming large on all sides. One day very early while it was yet dark, there was some uproar and it was feared that some enemy had come to assault the city or that some raid had been committed. The Muslims rallied from all parts and were prepared to march out for resistance. But to their amazement they beheld the Prophet coming back on naked horseback, having scoured through the outskirts. There was no danger, he informed them, and no cause for anxiety. The Prophet thus demonstrated that he was not merely a wise superior, but, at the same time, a brave soldier with a daring contempt of danger.

In short, Medina was in the throes of constant peril. The Muslims had to keep every moment on the alert. Every precaution was taken to nip the slightest danger in the bud. If trouble was reported to be hatching in some quarter and an attack upon Medina apprehended, a detachment was forthwith despatched to deal with the danger before it should grow in dimensions. What might have resulted in terrible conflagrations of war was thus averted by just a timely precaution. Hostile critics

accuse Islam of proselytizing at the point of the sword —an allegation diametrically opposed to the real state of things. Conversion was never secured by sword. Not a solitary instance of conversion has been reported as a fruit of expeditions. For the propagation of religion, the Prophet would appoint preachers, prepared expressly for the object. These theologians who had committed the Holy Qurán to memory used to spread the light of Islam to the various tribes. Certain treacherous people would sometimes invite these teachers under the pretext that they would have instruction in the teachings of Islam, and having them at their mercy, would mercilessly execute them. One such treacherous barbarity took place at Bir-i-Ma'una in the month of Safr in the year 4 A. H. Abu Bara, the chief of the tribes of Banu-Amir and Banu-Sulaim, came to the Prophet with some presents, asking for a few teachers to be deputed to his people, who, he hoped, might accept the message of Islam. The Prophet did not accept the presents and said he feared treachery from the people of Najd. But on Abu Bara's undertaking responsibility for the preachers' safety, the Prophet consented and sent seventy select theologians with him. On reaching a certain place, Bir-i-Ma'una, they found themselves in the grip of a large army. These emissaries of Divine message were all put to the sword, with the solitary exception of one, 'Amru Umayya, who managed to escape and narrate the heart-rending tale to the Prophet, who was terribly shocked at the brutal treachery.

A similar tragedy is recorded to have been enacted at another place Raji'. Certain tribes sent word to the Prophet, saying they had embraced Islam and were

anxious to have some teachers. The Prophet thereupon sent ten theologians, who met with the same fate. They offered some resistance. Eight were slain while struggling in self-defence, whereas two, Khubaib and Zaid, relying on the traitors' word of honour, surrendered. They proved equally untrue to their word, and instead of setting them free as pledged, they sold them as slaves to the Meccans. Khubaib was taken by his masters, the tribe of Haris, out of the limits of the *Haram,* the sacred area where violence of every form was forbidden even in pre-Islamic Arabia, and was executed. Before execution, he said his prayers, and then recited these verses: —

"While I am killed as a Muslim, I do not mind on which side I fall for the sake of Allah.

"All this is in Allah's path. He may shower his blessings on my mutilated limbs, should it so please Him."

Zaid was purchased by Safwan-bin-Umayya with the same intention. Abu Sufyan and the leading Quraish chiefs were all present at his execution. When the sword was unsheathed to strike off his head, Abu Sufyan threw an irresistible temptation in his way. "Do you like," he said, "that your life may be spared on the condition that Muhammad be slain in your stead." But how noble and dignified was Zaid's reply at this critical hour of his life, when death was staring him in the face! "My life is nothing as compared with the Prophet's. I would not like to see him put to the pain of an ordinary thorn prick, even though it were to save my life." This is a typical illustration of the deep attachment the companions of the Prophet cherished for him.

Such ruthless butchering of innocent Muslim teachers

by the perfidious Arab tribes was indeed very painful to the Prophet. He could put up with all sorts of hardships, so far as his own person was concerned, but he could not bear the tortures of those who had accepted the Truth and never failed to stand by him in thick and thin, who had cheerfully sacrificed their all in the path of Allah, and thus had won exalted positions in the eyes of the Lord. The murder of the theologians was an unbearable shock to him, so much so, that once he made up his mind to implore God to punish the offenders for these heinous crimes. As a matter of fact these tribes deserved to suffer the same form of torturous execution, but the Prophet, when so deeply grieved, contented himself with praying to God to deal with them. But God had sent him as a mercy to the whole of mankind.[1] He did not approve of his being so harsh as to invoke Divine wrath even upon such arch-criminals. He was to be the embodiment of universal mercy—mercy making no distinction between friend and foe. Hence the Divine revelation: "You have no concern in the affair whether He turns to them mercifully or chastises them, surely they are unjust."[2] No sooner was this Divine reproval received than did he give up harbouring any ill-will towards the treacherous perpetrators of the cold-blooded murder of the harmless preachers. What a tenderness of heart! Can history boast of a parallel?

To cut a long tale of woe and misery short, the whole of Arabia was seething with spite against Islam. The Jews, the hypocrites, the idolaters, in fact each and all, were out to annihilate Islam. Were it not for the

[1] 21 : 107. 3 : 127.

cautiousness on the part of the Prophet in suppressing every storm of opposition before it gained in strength, it would have been impossible for the Muslims to stay a single day in Medina. There was thus only one practical policy under the circumstances left for the Muslims to act upon—to scatter the enemy forces before they should unite and become strong enough to crush Islam. The situation called for a forward policy. They could not afford to sit quietly by, watching with complacence the enemy hosts gathering, till they had grown too strong for them. Obviously, this would have spelt the sure and certain extinction of Islam. Thus compelled by the sheer force of circumstances, self-preservation impelled them to take the bull, so to speak, by the horns. Of the several petty skirmishes that took place in this period, one is known as the battle of Badr-i-Sughra (small Badr) or Badr-i-Akhira (second Badr). Departing from the field of Uhud, the Quraish had thrown out a challenge to the Muslims, that fate would be tried again at Badr, the following year. Accordingly, when the time came, the Muslims marched to Badr, but not finding the Quraish there, peacefully returned, after disposing of, at the fair annually held there, whatever merchandise they had taken with them. The battle of Dumat-ul-Jandal and Zat-ur-Riqa' in the year 5 A. H., and the battles of Banu Lihyan and the Zu Qarad in 6 A. H., were all of this nature. On the receipt of intelligence as to the enemys' war preparations, a body of troops was forthwith despatched and the hostile forces used to scatter automatically, or in some cases after a little skirmishing. There are a number of other similar skirmishes, of which the one known as the battle of Muraisi'

or Banu Mustaliq, which took place in 5 A.H., is of some special note. The Banu Mustaliq came of the Khuza'a, a tribe which was in strong alliance with the Quraish. They inhabited a place called Muraisi', at a distance of nine days' journey from Medina. Their chief Haris-bin-Abi-Zirar, made preparations to attack Medina, possibly on the instigation of the Quraish. Intelligence was brought to the Prophet, who found it on enquiry to be correct. He thereupon ordered counter-preparations to scatter the forces of Haris. Haris fled with his army, but the inhabitants of Muraisi' gave the Muslims a battle, and were defeated. Six hundred prisoners of war, including Juwariya, the daughter of Haris, fell into the hands of the Muslims. Haris came to the Prophet in order to ransom his daughter. The matter was left to Juwariya's own choice, and she preferred to stay with the Prophet. This speaks volumes for the kind treatment the prisoners of war invariably received at the hands of the Muslims. The Prophet paid the ransom out of his own pocket and took Juwariya, on her own request, in marriage. As to the other prisoners, all the six hundred were released.

It was on this occasion that on the return journey to Medina, a baseless accusation was brought against 'Aysha's chastity. The righteous have always suffered at the hands of their enemies. A similar charge was laid long before at the door of Mary, the mother of Jesus, which the Holy Qurán refutes by speaking of it as a "glaringly false accusation against Mary."[1] This time the charge was levelled at an equally righteous woman by some of the hypocrites. This too turned

[1] 4 : 56.

out, on enquiry into the facts of the matter, to be the outcome of base spite. Besides, Divine revelation, as in the case of Mary, also came to acquit 'Aysha of suspicion.[1]

[1] Chapter 24 : 11—20.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BATTLE OF AHZAB OR THE CONFEDERATES

> "And when the believers saw the allies, they said: This is what Allah and His Apostle promised us, and Allah and His Apostle spoke the truth; and it only increased them in faith and submission."
>
> (The Holy Qurán, XXXIII, 22.)

WHILE the Prophet was engaged in suppressing mischief on the part of the Arab tribes, in order to obviate war on a large scale, the Quraish were busy preparing for another campaign against Medina. The Jewish clans exiled from Medina, now settling in Khaibar, were also allied to them in the common cause of the extirpation of Islam. They succeeded in rousing the Bedouin tribes in the vicinity of Mecca, so that they also joined the anti-Islamic alliance. Thus the Quraish, the Jews and the Bedouins all combined to deal a crushing blow to Islam. A large army, estimated at from ten to twenty-four thousand, was brought together, in the 5th year of Hegira. Even the Jewish tribes within the wall of Medina played false and joined hands, at the eleventh hour, with the assailants. Humanly calculating, there was little chance for the Muslims to survive the onrush of those overwhelming hosts.

Intelligence of this impending attack on an unprecedented scale was brought to the Holy Prophet, who immediately summoned his companions to take counsel

as to how to meet the situation. Salman, "the Persian," suggested that Medina should be fortified by a deep and broad ditch all round it. On one side, the city had a natural barrier of rugged rocks; on the other, it was protected by the stone walls of houses, built compactly together, in unbroken continuation, which constituted by themselves a strong fortification. The work of digging a ditch was at once undertaken on the side exposed to attack. The Prophet apportioned out the labour amongst parties of ten men each, participating in person like an ordinary labourer. Covered with earth and dust, they all sang these verses in chorus: "O Allah! Had it not been for Thy mercy, we could not have had guidance. We would not have given alms, neither would we have prayed. Send down tranquillity upon us, and establish our steps in battle. For they are up against us and they wish to pervert us by force, but we refuse." The last words, "But we refuse" formed the burden of the song, and were repeated again and again. At the same time the Prophet invoked Allah's blessings on the Refugees and the Helpers in these words:

"O Allah! there is no felicity but the felicity of the hereafter, O Allah! have mercy on the Refugees and the Helpers!"

History records but one solitary instance of a personage, who held spiritual as well as temporal sway over a nation, and yet worked as an ordinary workman, side by side with them, in the hour of extreme national danger.

It is a distinguishing feature of the Prophet's character that he conferred lustre on whatever he set his hands to. Placed in whatever position, he acquitted himself with marvellous grace. If on the one hand he was the man-

liest of kings, he was at the same time the kingliest of men. In the course of the excavation they came to a hard stone. All exerted themselves to their utmost but they could not break it. It was therefore suggested to the Prophet, who had chalked out the limits with his own hands, to allow a slight deviation from the original plan. Taking up a pick-axe he addressed himself to the task which others had failed to accomplish. Getting down into the ditch, he struck hard at the stone which gave way, emitting at the same time, a spark of fire, on which the Prophet, followed by the companions, raised a cry of *Allah-o-Akbar* or God is Great, and said that he saw in the spark that he had been awarded the keys of the palace of the Syrian king. A second stroke and the stone was split, the same spark of light coming out. Once more the *Takbir,* "God is Great," was shouted aloud, the Prophet observing that he had been given the keys of the Persian kingdom. The third attempt broke the stone to pieces, and the Prophet announced to have seen the keys of Yaman coming into his possession. Then he explained that on the first occasion, he was shown the palace of the Cæsar, on the second that of the Chosroes of Persia, and on the third, that of San'a, and that he had been informed that his followers would gain possession of all those countries. A wonderful phenomenon! A huge force, 24000 strong is at the very gates of Medina, ready to crush Islam. The whole of Arabia is thirsting for the Muslims' blood. And in the midst of these dire clouds of misfortune, the Prophet's eye perceives a distant ray of the future power of Islam. Is it not something passing the wildest stretch of human imagination? Who but the All-wise and All-knowing God could pos-

sibly reveal such mysteries of the future, at a juncture when Islam itself was threatened with utter extinction?

It was an hour of terrible consternation for the Muslims when the confederate hosts fell in full force upon Medina. The very foundations of the city were shaken. The Holy Qurán depicts the anguish and perplexity of the moment in these words:

"When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when the eyes turned dull and the hearts rose up to the throats, and you began to think diverse thoughts about Allah. There the believers were tried and they were shaken with a severe shaking."[1]

But through the seeming scene of dread and terror, the hearts of the true Muslims could read the fulfilment of what had been promised to them by Allah and His Apostle. Their thoughts are thus set forth in the Holy Qurán:

"And when the believers saw the Allies, they said: This is what Allah and His Apostle promised us, and Allah and His Apostle spoke the truth; and it only increased them in faith and submission."[2]

Notwithstanding the enormously overwhelming odds bent upon their destruction, and their fears in the grim situation, the Muslims perceived that this was the last desperate attempt of a dying enemy. This would break up the enemy's power once for all, and usher in the happy era of the triumph of Islam.

By way of a precaution against a possible attack from without, or Jewish treachery from within, the females and children were removed to well-fortified places. The siege lasted for about a month, during which period the

[1] 33 : 10—11. [2] 33 : 22.

Muslims including the Prophet, suffered a great deal from starvation. For days they received no food and had to fasten pieces of stones on their abdomens. But their spirit was not a whit subdued on that account. One day the Prophet suggested the buying off of the tribe of Ghatafan by offering them one third of the produce of Medina. This would go a great way to weaken the enemy's strength. Notwithstanding their starvation and the straits to which the Muslims had been reduced by a prolonged siege and perpetual watch and vigil, they thought it below their dignity to submit to such humiliation. The Helpers, who were directly concerned in the proposed bargain, said they never paid any subsidy to them even in the pre-Islamic days, how could they tolerate to cow down before them, especially when the honour of Islam was involved. Come what may, they would fight to the last man.

The Jews and the hypocrites were on the look-out for an opportunity to rise from within, simultaneously with the attack from without. Duels were tried first in which the Muslims had the upper hand. 'Amru-bin-Wudd, a famous Arab hero, believed to be a match for a thousand, was slain at Ali's hands. At last the Quraish made a general attack with full force, but they could not press their way across the ditch. Their arrows and stones, however, came down in terrible showers, and were it not for the well-disciplined steadfastness of the Muslims, the enemy must have won the day. Their firmness was at last crowned with success. The large army, 24 000 strong, could not succeed in breaking through their defence and got exhausted. The siege became tiresome to them. Besides, they ran short of provisions. A storm,

which blew down their tents and overturned their cooking utensils confused them altogether. The Holy Qurán alludes to the incident in the words: "Then We sent down against them a strong wind and an army which you could not see."[1] The wind accomplished for the Muslims what was impossible for them to do with the strength of their own arms. Finding the very elements of nature against them, the Quraish and their confederates were much overawed. They took it as an evil portent. Thus losing heart they marched off the same night, so that, to the great joy and thanksgiving of the Muslims, not one of them could be seen there the following morning. Was it anything but the Divine hand at work behind the scene, which frustrated the attempts of overwhelming odds, who intended to crush a handful of Muslims, and, which set at naught the treacherous schemes of the Jews and the hypocrites? Thus ended in utter disappointment and dismay the most powerfully organised expedition against Islam.

[1] 33 : 9.

CHAPTER XIX

RELATIONS WITH THE JEWS

> "Surely deep hatred has already appeared from out of their mouths and what their breasts conceal is greater still." (The Holy Qurán, III, 117.)

THE Jews, as already observed, formed a potent element of the population of Medina. Trade coupled with usury had made them considerably rich. The Aus and the Khazraj generally borrowed money from them. In point of education too, the Jews outdid them. In almost every respect, they were ahead of their neighbours.

On the arrival of the Prophet at Medina, the Jews entered into an agreement with the Muslims. But the growing prosperity of Islam kindled the spark of jealousy in their hearts. Keeping secretly in touch with the hypocrites, they made much mischief against the Muslims. They did not spare even the Prophet, whom they would address in insolent and derogatory words. For instance while speaking to him, they would twist the word *raa'ina* which means "listen to us" into *ra'ina,* meaning "he is a fool," on account of shortening of the vowel. Likewise the word *Assalam-o-'Alaikum,* i. e., peace be with you, would be muttered as *Assam-o-'Alaikum,* i. e., death overtake you. Various ingenious plans were adopted to injure the cause of Islam. Some would embrace the faith with the set purpose of bring-

ing many more out of the fold. What was only jealousy in the beginning, grew in due course into positive enmity. Insinuations against Muslim ladies in obscene verses were also freely indulged in. They stooped even so low as to molest them in the streets. One such incident in a street of Medina resulted in the murder of a Jew and a Muslim, and ultimately led to actual fighting between the two communities. The Jewish tribe of Banu Qainuqa', with whom the trouble arose, warned the Muslims to bear in mind that they were not like the Quraish; they would give them a good lesson. Thus breaking their compact, they resolved upon fighting out the issue with the Muslims, and betook themselves to fortified strongholds. The Muslims too had to prepare for war and laid siege to their forts. After a siege of fifteen days, they offered to surrender and to bear whatever penalty the Prophet might choose to impose upon them, for their breach of agreement. They were required to quit Medina which they did, and settled in Syria. This came about a month after the battle of Badr.

Another Jewish tribe, the Banu Nazir, notwithstanding their agreement with the Muslims, maintained secret negotiations with the Quraish from the very beginning. Before the battle of Badr, the Quraish wrote to them, asking them to murder the Prophet. Once they invited the Prophet, and made an attempt on his life; but the attempt was a failure. Their treachery becoming manifest through such like acts, the Prophet could not safely allow such a dangerous element to remain in the very heart of Medina. They were consequently offered the alternatives of renewing their agreement with the Muslims as an assurance of their peaceful intentions, or

settling elsewhere. The Banu Quraiza, who were so far not guilty of serious treachery against Islam, willingly renewed the agreement. But the Banu Nazir, who were bent on mischief, refused to do so. They now became open enemies of Islam. 'Abdullah-bin-Ubayy also promised them help, which confirmed them all the more in their opposition. Islam, it must be borne in mind, was at this time passing through a very critical stage of its career. It was the period of the battle of Uhud, when the enemies were on all sides up in arms to strike a death-blow at the faith. An external assault was dangerous, but an internal outburst, which might come any moment, was still more so. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. This was possible in the case of an external attack, which would allow the Muslims time to prepare themselves to meet the situation. But an unexpected explosion in Medina itself, would mean a sure blow at the very heart of Islam. The Banu Nazir had friendly relations with the enemies of Islam. Their refusal to renew the agreement was therefore tantamount to the declaration of war. Besides, they were guilty of having attempted to take the Prophet's life. In view of all these considerations, the only course left was to treat them as avowed enemies. Siege was therefore laid to their strongholds, which was at last raised on the condition that the Banu Nazir should leave Medina. Some of them went to Khaibar and settled there. This took place in the fourth year of the Flight.

The Banu Nazir played an important part in connection with the battle of Ahzab. Besides rousing the Quraishite tribes they roamed about the desert, visiting Bedouin haunts and stirring them against Islam. The

Banu Quraiza, whose attitude towards the Muslims was so far friendly, were also affected. At first, the Banu Quraiza refused to join in a war against Islam. But they were given every assurance that the Muslims stood no chance of survival. They could not possibly withstand the combined force of the vast numbers springing up like mushrooms, on every side, to put an end to Islam. It was, they were told, time that they should make their choice between throwing in their lot with the Muslims, and joining hands with the confederates. The Banu Quraiza were thus prevailed upon to make common cause with the rest of anti-Islamic tribes. Breaking their pact with the Muslims, they entered into an alliance with the confederates, promising them help in the ensuing conflict—the battle of Ahzab. The new compact, though made secretly, did not remain a dead letter. The Banu Quraiza actually took part in the battle. The Holy Qurán refers to this in the following words: "Those of the people of the Book who rendered them (the confederates) help."[1] History too, furnishes testimony to their participation in the battle. Nay, they had planned an attack on Muslim females as well. Thus it was an hour of critical gravity for the Muslims. With twenty-four thousand strong on the other side of the ditch, exerting tooth and nail to crush Islam, and with the hypocrites busy mongering mischief within, the treachery of the Banu Quraiza added enormously to the Muslims' difficulties. Hence at the termination of the battle of Ahzab it was deemed meet to inflict due punishment on them, which might serve as a preventive against the recurrence of such an underhand trick in future. Siege was laid to their fast-

[1] 33 : 26.

nessess. After some resistance they surrendered. This took place in the fifth year of the Hegira. Sa'd-bin-Mu'az, formerly their ally, was chosen by themselves to determine, as an arbitrator, what punishment they deserved. Had they left the decision to the Prophet, they would most probably have received the same treatment as their sister-tribes, the Banu Qainuqa' and the Banu Nazir. At worst, they would have been exiled. But Sa'd, the arbitrator of their own choice, viewed their perilous treachery in the nick of time, with great abhorrence. The gravity of their offence, he believed, called for an exemplary punishment, without which solemn agreements would in future command little respect, and be treated as worthless scraps of paper by any of the parties concerned. Hence he came to the conclusion that punishment in no way milder than that prescribed for a vanquished foe in their own Scripture, the Old Testament, was their just desert. This is what the Old Testament lays down on the point:

"And when the Lord, thy God, hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword. But the woman and the little ones and the cattle and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof shalt thou take in to thyself and thou shalt eat the spoils of thy enemies which the Lord thy God has given thee." (Deut. 20, 13–14.)

Thus the verdict of Sa'd, in accordance with the Mosaic law, sentenced the male portion of the Banu Quraiza, counting three hundred, to death, the females and children to captivity, and the property to be confiscated. Harsh as the punishment may appear, it was exactly the judgment the Jews used to pass, under the law of their Book, against their fallen foes. Besides, the heinous crime of treachery of which the Banu Quraiza

were guilty, would in like circumstances, be visited with no lighter punishment even in this age of civilisation. The judge was one of their own choice, and the sentence was in strict conformity with their own sacred law. Again, they were guilty of treachery of a dangerous nature. Is there any sense in finding fault with the Prophet on this account? The objection against the harshness of this punishment is an objection against the Mosaic Law. It is, in fact, an unconscious censure of that law as well as an admission that a more humane law must come to supersede it. A contrast with the Islamic law on this point will bring out into clear relief what a tender, sympathetic and compassionate law Islam came to inaugurate.

The battle of Khaibar comes after the Truce of Hudaibiyya in the seventh year of the Flight, but inasmuch as it has a bearing on the Islamic-Jewish relations, it would not be out of place to touch upon it in this connection. When banished from Medina, the major portion of the Banu Nazir, especially their ring-leaders settled at Khaibar, the stronghold of the Jews in Arabia, at a distance of about 200 miles from Medina. Here they held independent sway, and had fortified the place strongly. On the arrival of the Banu Nazir, the seed of enmity against Islam was sown in their hearts. On the occasion of the battle of Ahzab, they roused the Meccans, the tribe of Ghatafan and the Bedouin tribes, against Islam, and even enlisted the co-operation of the Banu Quraiza. With the unsuccessful expedition of Ahzab, the Muslim power took firm roots in Medina. The Jewish malice, however, kept growing in bitterness. They held secret negotiations with 'Abdullah-bin-Ubayy,

the head of the hypocrites, who gave them every assurance that they could yet crush the power of Islam. In the year 6 A.H. the Prophet was debarred by the Meccans from performing the pilgrimage and had to conclude a truce with them on rather humiliating conditions. This deepened the impression of the Khaibar Jews as to the weakness of the Muslim power, and they began to cherish fresh hopes of bringing about the destruction of Islam. They took to conspiring once more with the tribe of Ghatafan, with a view to directing another expedition against Medina. Intelligence of their designs came to the Prophet, who, after due verification of the report, directed a body of 1600 man to advance on Khaibar. Midway between Khaibar and Ghatafan lay a place Raji'. On strategical grounds, this was chosen as the base-line. This cut off all intercourse between the two places. No help from the Ghatafan was thus forthcoming. Nay, the latter, conscious of their guilt, apprehended an attack upon themselves, and felt concerned on their own account. It was thought that the Jews would abandon the idea of resistance, and would surrender. But on advancing on Khaibar, it was found that the Jews had made every preparation to offer the Muslims a vigorous battle. Fighting commenced; several fortresses were captured by the Muslims, but one, called Qamus, which was very strongly fortified and manned. It held out for about twenty days, but being stormed fiercely by 'Ali, it fell. After their surrender, the Jews requested that they might be left in possession of their lands, on the condition that half of the produce would be made over as subsidy. The request was granted and the Jews were allowed to retain possession of the place, though the

Prophet knew they would not refrain from mischief-making. Immediately after the settlement, the leading Jews conspired against the life of the Prophet. Zainab, wife of Haris a Jewish chief, who had fallen in the action, was instigated to invite the Prophet to dinner and poison him. By Divine Providence, however, the Prophet had hardly lifted a morsel to his mouth, when, suspecting treachery, he withheld his hand. But one of his companions, Bishr-bin-Bara, who took the food, died of the effect of poison. Treacherous and mischievous as they were, the generous treatment that the Muslims accorded them had no effact on them. It failed to extinguish the fire of enmity in their hearts. They proved a source of perpetual trouble, ever plotting mean tricks to injure the Muslims. Down to the regime of 'Umar's Caliphate, they never ceased playing an underhand game. Once, they threw down 'Umar's own son, 'Abdullah, from the top of a house. Every attempt at conciliating them having proved futile, they were at last exiled to Syria.

The Prophet, however, dealt with the Jews of Khaibar mercifully. He did all in his power to conciliate them. Their attempt to poison him would have justified the most drastic measures against the whole people. But he was anxious to see them united in a bond of friendship with the Muslims. No punitive measures were adopted against them. Only the immediate perpetrator of the mean crime, Zainab, was punished with death, and that too, for the murder of Bishr. The conspirators—and in fact the whole nation was involved in the foul attempt—were all allowed to go scot-free. They all deserved death, but the Prophet hoped that forgiveness might change their hostile attitude. Over and above this, he took a further step to

make friendship with them. Among the captives that had fallen into the hands of the Muslims, was Safiyya, the daughter of their chief. The Prophet liberated her and took her in marriage. Fabulous treasures, it is alleged, came into the possession of the Muslims at the conquest of Khaibar. All these, however, are mere imaginary tales, the worth of which can be well gauged from the fact that at his marriage ceremony with Safiyya, the Prophet had not the means to entertain, as is customary, his friends to a feast. The companions were asked to come with their own meals, which constituted the wedding feast. What was placed before the assembly consisted only of dates and ground barley. In this simple manner was celebrated the matrimony of a triumphant king with a princess.

CHAPTER XX

THE TRUCE OF HUDAIBIYYA

> "Surely he has given thee a clear victory, that Allah may rectify for thee that which has gone before of the faults attributed to thee and that which remains behind, and complete His favour to thee and guide thee on a right way, and that Allah might help thee with a mighty help."
>
> (The Holy Qurán, XLVIII, 1–3.)

THE battle of Ahzab established the fact that Islam was supported by a Divine hand. The Quraish did their utmost in two successive battles, Badr and Uhud, but could do little harm to Islam. The various Bedouin tribes too, exerted themselves severally, but failed to shake the firm foothold of Islam. The hypocrites and the Jews in vain sought to undermine Islam from within. At last, the Quraish, the Bedouins, the hypocrites and the Jews, that is the external and internal enemies, all made a combined attempt against Islam, but with the same result. This was the final struggle and never thereafter did the enemy gather courage to assail Medina. These are historical facts, admitted alike by friend and foe; yet the cry is raised that Islam owes its propagation to the instrumentality of the sword. But facts and figures, as recorded in the broad daylight of history, point to just the reverse conclusion. The truth is that Islam spread, not by the sword, but in spite of the sword. No other religion has displayed such a mettle. Sword

fell on the faith from all sides, but instead of destroying it, it helped as it were to spread it. Three successive attacks were made on Medina, with a view to extirpating Islam, each more vigorous than the foregoing one. But what was the result? Was the power of Islam weakened in any way? On the contrary, each time we notice a considerable rise in the numbers of Muslims put in the field. At Badr, the Muslim army consisted of barely 300, while a year later, at Uhud it rose to 700, and lastly at Ahzab, to about 2000. A gradual growth is thus visible in the power of Islam, in proportion as the attack upon it grows in fury. The greater, that is to say, the attempt to crush it down, the more did it flourish. The more it was suppressed, the more it rose. Day by day it went on thriving; no storm could uproot it, no hot wind could blight it. Divine hand was at work to support it.

About a year had elapsed since the battle of Ahzab when the Prophet saw in a vision that he, along with his companions, was performing the pilgrimage at the Ka'ba. It was thought that the Quraish, as well as the Bedouins who had done their utmost against Islam, were at last impressed with its inherent strength. Similarly it was thought that they might likewise be impressed with its truth, and would not offer resistance to the Muslims performing the pilgrimage. Besides, the pilgrimage to the Ka'ba was a privilege never denied even to the worst of enemies. There was thus no reason why the Quraish should stand in the way of the Muslims. Consequently in the year 6 A. H., the Prophet with about 1400 of his companions, started on a pilgrimage to Mecca. By way of precaution, lest their motive should be misunderstood, it was strictly

forbidden to carry arms. This would lay the Quraishite suspicions at rest, assuring them of the Muslims' peaceful intentions. A sheathed sword was the only arm that was allowed to be carried. A sword was in those days a commonplace thing to be always worn, no matter how peaceful the state. Taking sacrificial animals with them as usual, they set out, all the 1400, for Mecca. On approaching the vicinity of the town, they found the Quraish ready to offer them armed resistance. Budail, the chief of the tribe of Khuza'a, though not a Muslim, but well-disposed towards Islam, brought this intelligence to the Prophet, who sent him back to tell the Quraish that the Muslims had come to perform the pilgrimage and not to fight. The Quraish, it was also proposed, might conclude peace with them for a certain period. Having sent this word to the Quraish, the Muslims halted at Hudaibiyya, a day's journey from Mecca.

Budail communicated the message to the Quraish. The wiser and experienced element was in favour of accepting the peace proposal. They had good reasons to believe that they were unable to do any harm to Islam. They had already done their best more than once in its opposition, but to no purpose. Besides, with the conclusion of peace, they would be in a position to resume their trade with Syria, suspended so far in consequence of hostilities with the Muslims, who commanded the route. 'Urwa was sent as a plenipotentiary to discuss terms with the Muslims. In the course of the discussion, he remarked that it was better for the Prophet not to place much reliance in his followers, for they would disappear like anything, should a calamity befall him. Abu Bakr was greatly enraged at this, and treated him rather

harshly. It so happened that the time for the late-afternoon prayer came, 'Urwa being yet there. While the Prophet made the usual ablution, his companions would not let the waste water drop on the earth; so intense was their love for his person. 'Urwa was deeply impressed with the sight. The negotiations ended in a fiasco, but he carried with him the impression of the high esteem in which the Prophet was held by his friends. "I have been to the courts of the Kaiser as well as the Chosroes," he told the Quraish, "but have never witnessed a semblance of the devotion Muhammad commands."

Another emissary was sent to the Quraish by the Prophet, but he was maltreated, the camel on which he rode being killed. An armed Quraish detachment also came out to take the Muslims by surprise, but was itself taken prisoner. The Muslims, however, were not out for fighting, and hence let them all go. At last 'Usman was commissioned to negotiate with the Quraish. The Quraish arrested him and kept him in custody. A rumour went forth that 'Usman had been murdered. The Muslims began to believe that the Quraish were bent upon fighting. It was a critical situation. The Muslims were practically unarmed and comparatively much smaller in number. The Quraish had every advantage on their side. But what a firm faith in Divine protection! When all negotiations failed, and the enemy was bent on bloodshed, it was not for a Muslim to turn his back. The Prophet called upon his companions to pledge afresh, in view of the inordinately critical nature of the situation, that they would fight to the very last man, in the defence of their faith. Under a certain tree close by, the pledge was cheerfully taken. In the history

of Islam this goes by the name of *Bai'at-ur-Rizwan.* It was an act of unparalleled dauntless self-sacrifice in the cause of Truth, and as such a red-letter event in the annals of Islam. After the death of the Prophet, the tree, which commemorated this heroic resolve, began to be much visited by the people. But fearing lest credulity should later on invest it with some sort of sanctity, it was cut down at the bidding of 'Umar, the Second Caliph. Such was the jealousy of the early Muslims for the principle of the Unity of God. Anything smacking of polytheism, no matter of what historical importance or interest, could not be tolerated.

The Muslims' resolve to shed the last drop of their blood in the defence of their faith, brought the Quraish to their senses. Their past experience stood them in good stead. They could now realize what such a resolve on the part of the Muslims meant. Unarmed though they were, and numerically weak besides, the Quraish could foresee what disaster was in store for them, should the worst come to the worst. Thus chastened in spirits, they deputed one Suhail-bin-'Amru to resume peace negotiations. A truce was drawn up, restoring a state of peace between the two parties for a period of ten years; the main clauses of the treaty were as follows:

1. The Muslims shall this year return without performing the pilgrimage.

2. Next year they may come, but shall not stay at Mecca longer than three days.

3. They shall not take with them any of the Muslims already living in Mecca, and on the other hand they shall not stand in the way of any one from among themselves, should he wish to remain behind at Mecca.

4. Should any of the Meccans go over to Medina, the Muslims shall hand him over to the Meccans; but if any of the Medinite Muslims should rejoin the Meccans, the latter shall not restore him to the Muslims.

5. The Arab tribes shall be at liberty to enter into alliance with whichever party they choose.

When putting the agreement in black and white, 'Ali, who acted as a scribe, began with the words, *Bism-illah-irrahman-irrahim,* i. e., in the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Suhail objected to the adoption of this form of Muslim opening to the document, insisting that he must have the traditional form, that had all along been in vogue in Arabia, viz., *Bism-i-kallahumma,* i. e., in thy name, O God. To this the Prophet agreed. Further on, he again took exception to the words: "This is an agreement between Muhammad, the Apostle of Allah, and the Quraish." "If we were to admit," he remonstrated, "that you are the Apostle of God, why all this bloodshed." But 'Ali said he would not expunge the words "the Apostle of Allah," with his own hand. The Prophet, however, attached no importance to such an insignificant detail. He asked to be shown where the words in dispute were. The spot being pointed out to him, he scoured out the words with his own hand, and dictated the words, "Muhammad son of 'Abdullah" instead.

The terms were extremely disgusting to the Muslims, but out of regard for the Prophet's attitude, they kept quiet. Meanwhile Abu Jandal, the son of Suhail, appeared on the scene. He had embraced Islam at Mecca and the Quraish tortured him on that account. At last he managed to escape from the hands of his persecutors and was now

come to the Muslim camp, expecting of course, to find a warm welcome there. He showed the scars of his tortures to the Muslims. The Prophet was moved, and tried to secure an exception to the fourth term of the agreement in favour of Abu Jandal. But Suhail was inexorable, so the Prophet had to yield. Abu Jandal's miserable plight extremely moved the Muslims. They could not bear the sight of his being thrust back into the throes of persecution. 'Umar was too deeply touched to exercise self-control. As a spokesman of the general body of the Muslims, he earnestly remonstrated with the Prophet. "Are you not the true Apostle of Allah?" he asked. "Is not ours a righteous cause?" On getting a reply in the affirmative, he argued, "Why then, should we suffer so much humiliation in the matter of faith?" The Prophet assured him that whatever he was doing was at the bidding of Allah. "Did you not tell us," rejoined 'Umar, "that we shall perform the pilgrimage?" "But I never told you," replied the Prophet, "that we shall do so this very year." In the same manner 'Umar argued with Abu Bakr on the question, and he too gave him a similar reply that everything was done by the Prophet in obedience to the will of Allah.

In brief, the Muslims felt much troubled on account of Abu Jandal, but they could not do anything in the matter. The Prophet observed that it was a crucial test of the Muslims' word of honour, and that they must respect it at all costs. He also consoled Abu Jandal, telling him that Allah would surely open him a way out.

On his return to Medina, the Prophet received the

Divine revelation, "Surely we have given you a clear victory . . ."[1] What was considered by the Muslims to be an ignominious peace was a real victory in the eyes of God. The Prophet immediately sent for 'Umar to give him the happy news. 'Umar was afraid, for he had been rather too outspoken in discussion with the Holy Prophet concerning the peace-terms, and he thought he was perhaps summoned in order to be reprimanded. On arrival, however, his fear changed into joy when he heard the Divine revelation. Did it pertain, he asked the Prophet, to the truce of Hudaibiyya, and on being told that it did he actually believed with the other Muslims that it was indeed a victory. So far everybody was smarting under the humiliating terms of the treaty, but now the chapter *Al-Fatah,* i. e., the chapter of Victory, was on all lips. Was it in any way an act of ultra-credulity on their part? As a matter of fact, their own experience in the past, convinced them of the truth of the Divine revelation. The career of Islam so far was replete with similar events.

That the truce of Hudaibiyya also turned out to be the triumph of Islam, is borne out by the fact that on the occasion of his advance on Mecca about a year and a half later, the Prophet was accompanied by 10000 comrades instead of the 1400, which was the number at the time of this truce. How to account for this remarkable rise in the number of Muslims? The fact is that the state of warfare which had so far prevailed between the Muslims and the non-Muslims, had created a wide gulf between them. General malice towards Islam would not permit the Arabs to mix with the Muslims. Hence they had so

[1] 48 : 1.

far no opportunity of coming into contact with the Muslims, and becoming aquainted with their Islamic virtues. It was for the first time since the inception of the Islamic movement, that the gulf was bridged over, for a considerable length of time, by the truce of Hudaibiyya. This afforded the non-Muslims an occasion to calmly ponder over the inherent virtues of Islam. They came to realize how all those who had been under the Prophet's moral influence, were edified and raised to a higher plane. It is but human that one may not appreciate the ways of those against whom one harbours even the most feeble form of enmity. The Arabs were bent upon the destruction of Islam. They were therefore not well disposed to appreciate the teachings of Islam. Now that the barrier was removed and normal intercourse with the Muslims resumed, they were in a position to carefully study the morals and manners of the Muslims. The false impressions created by hostility concerning the Prophet all vanished. They came to understand for themselves that neither was he for cutting asunder blood-ties, nor was he a mischief-monger as they had supposed. The nobility of his nature and the beauty of his morals now dawned upon them. They realized that they had been the dupes of misrepresentation, and that the Prophet's character was far above what had been depicted to them. Thus impressed with the sublimity of the Prophet's ideals and the purity of his comrades' lives, a large number of them joined the brootherhood of Islam. And thus the words of the Divine revelation, which the Prophet had received on his way back from Hudaibiyya found fulfilment: "That Allah may rectify for thee that which has

gone before of the faults attributed to thee and that which remains behind."[1] The faults imputed to him through malice were all removed, and his lovely personality was unveiled once more in all the richness of its beauty. The words "that which remains behind" also contain a promise for the future. Any accusation brought against him at any future time, announce the prophetic words, shall not be allowed to stand, but shall similarly be washed away. One has only to watch the daily changing angle of vision of Europe towards the Prophet to appreciate the truth of this portion of the verse. The ugly caricature of his character that has been so far drawn, either through misconception or misrepresentation, is undergoing a marked change of its own account. Europe is daily awakening to the nobility and purity of his character. A general recognition of the true sublimity of the Prophet's life is bound to come, sooner or later, as foretold in the Qurán. Of course, such an appreciation must come now, as it did before, in the wake of a general state of peace. Europe's greed for territorial aggrandizement having now been satiated, it may be hoped that an era of idealism is about to dawn. The time has come when a closer contact with the Muslim world may disillusion Europe of its wrong notions concerning Islam, when it may come to realize, as did the enemies of Islam thirteen centuries ago, that the fair face of Islam is free from any stigma with which ignorance and prejudice have disfigured it. It may realize, groping as it is for light which it can not find in the Church religion, that its salvation lies in the same Islam which it has all along painted in the darkest colours. Strange are the ways of God and

[1] 48 : 2.

little wonder that the history of Islam should repeat itself. Those bent upon its destruction may fall a victim to its moral force, as it happened at the conclusion of the truce of Hudaibiyya. The power of God may once more manifest itself and what appears, to all human calculations, the final overthrow, may turn out to be the real triumph, of Islam.

That such harsh terms should have been accepted by the Prophet was not without a set Divine purpose. The incident is an eloquent testimony to the fact that warfare was held in abhorrence by him. So far, the Muslims have ever had the upper hand in the various conflicts with the Quraish. Not once were they defeated, notwithstanding the united might of several tribes. They regarded the terms as derogatory to their faith and insisted on rejecting them. They had pledged to fight to the last man to vindicate the honour of Islam. In spite of this, whereever there is the slightest indication on the part of the enemy towards peace, the Prophet welcomes it with open arms. The Muslims were not defeated, but the terms of the treaty seemed to treat them as the vanquished party; yet the Prophet accepted them. Can such be the attitude of one bent upon domineering over others, as is alleged. Is it not a conclusive testimony to show how peace-loving the Prophet was? The Qurán too enjoins the same when it says, "And if they (the enemy) incline towards peace, thou shalt also incline towards it."[1]

But what, after all, is the outcome of the truce, which appeared as humiliating even to the Muslims themselves. Does it put a check upon conversions in

[1] 8:61.

Mecca? Humanly speaking, it should have done so. The truce is a fresh testimony to the helplessness of the Muslims. So far, the converts could count upon the help of their Muslim brethren at Medina. But under the terms of the truce, the Muslims were deprived of their right to succour the converts, who were in the grip of their oppressors; nay, if the latter should manage to make good their escape to Medina, even then the Muslims could not give them shelter. It is a great relief to be in the company of friends in time of distress, even though the friends themselves be in no better plight. It is still a consolation to be in the same boat with them. But even this last source of solace was denied to the Muslim converts by the truce of Hudaibiyya. How, under these circumstances, can one take courage to embrace Islam? At home, the Moslem is put to untold tortures, but now at Medina too, he fares no better. The example of Abu Jandal is there to damp the spirits of the most enthusiastic. Such being the situation, the progress of Islam should come, as a matter of course, to a standstill. But is it not remarkable that on the contrary, Islamic light spreads during this period at a tenfold pace? What is then the one logical conclusion? Nothing more than this that the intrinsic worth of Islam outweighs by far the prospect of the whole lot of tortures. The enchanting beauty of Islam makes its lover forgetful of all pains its acceptance may entail. Rejection at Medina, no more than persecution at Mecca, could discourge them. Sufferings and afflictions sank into insignificance before the all-absorbing loveliness of Truth. Here is another occasion for the critic to ponder. Should he call this the spreading of Islam by sword, or, the spreading of Islam in spite of the enemy's sword?

'Utba, another daring convert to Islam, tortured no less ruthlessly by the Quraish, following the example of Abu Jandal, decamped to Medina. Two envoys of the Quraish followed close upon his heels and demanded his extradition according to the truce of Hudaibiyya. Like his predecessor, he was also advised by the Prophet to return to Mecca. "Do you force me back to idolatry," remonstrated 'Utba in amazement. A trying situation again—'Utba pleading in the name of religion on the one hand, the Quraish insisting on the observance of the treaty on the other. This time, being in Medina, the Prophet's position is far more secure than it was in the case of Abu Jandal at Hudaibiyya, when the Muslims were but a handful, as well as unarmed. But word once pledged cannot lightly be set aside according to the Prophet's code of honour, even though a Muslim were to turn apostate on that account. "'Utba," says the Prophet, "we cannot help making you over to the Quraish. Allah will open a way out for you." The Prophet's regard for his word is marvellous, but 'Utba's love for Islam is no less so. Why on earth should he bother about Islam any longer when the Prophet himself is thrusting him back into the hands of the infidels? But captivated as he is by the charm of Islam, it is not for him to question why. Humbly and implicitly he submits to the Prophet's behest and accompanies the two Meccans back to the place where death is staring him in the face. There is no earthly power to shield him against the wrath of the Quraish. The instinct of self-preservation impels him to work out his own salvation. Come what may, he thought, he must strike a blow to save his life. Seizing upon a favourable opportunity, he kills one of the guards,

the other scampering away for his life. But still Medina is a forbidden land for him. He must find a resting place elsewhere. So he takes up his sojourn at 'Is, a place on the seashore—a sort of neutral zone. The rest of the afflicted at Mecca, against whom the gates of Medina are equally shut up, resort to the same place, which grows, by and by, into a fairly big settlement of Muslim refugees. They were not subject to the terms of the truce of Hudaibiyya. Their growing strength alarmed the Quraish, who feared lest the Muslims should some day obstruct their trade with Syria. Hence they thought it expedient to withdraw the clause that required the extradition of refugees from Mecca, for they thought the withdrawal would go a long way to weaken the 'Is settlement.

CHAPTER XXI

INVITATION TO VARIOUS SOVEREIGNS

> "Say: O followers of the Book, Come to an equitable proposition between us and you that we shall not serve any but Allah, and that we shall not associate aught with Him, and that some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah."
>
> (The Holy Qurán, III, 63.)

THAT the truce of Hudaibiyya was indeed a signal triumph of Islam was amply borne out by subsequent events. The numerical strength of the Muslims waxed manifold. Conquerors of fame such as Khalid and 'Amru bin-ul-'As, who were once the pride of the enemy ranks, now rallied to the standard of Islam. Thus the peace had achieved what no victory on the battle-field, however great, could have accomplished. The Prophet looked upon it as the harbinger of splendid achievements, and adjusted the programme of his activities accordingly. Immediately after his return from Hudaibiyya he summoned all the Muslims together, and explained to them that Islam had come as a mercy to the whole of mankind. The time had arrived, he told them, that the message of Islam should be carried far and wide, to the sovereigns of the neighbouring kingdoms, the Kaiser of Rome, the Chosroes of Persia, the Aziz of Egypt, the Negus of Abyssinia and certain Arab Chiefs, inviting them to Islam. Of these, the despatch addressed to Mukoukas, the king of Egypt, was only recently found

out, preserved to this day in original. Tradition also says that Mukoukas took care to secure the epistle within a precious casket. Its facsimile has now been published and reads exactly as reported in the tradition. Mukoukas received the messenger with great honour, and also sent some presents to the Prophet though he did not accept the faith. These included a mule on which the Prophet would ride in person, and two maids, of whom one, Mary, was married to the Prophet, and thus raised from the state of a slave-girl to the status of a queen. The other was married to Hassan the poet.

Dihya Kalbi was sent to the Kaiser with an epistle. It so happened that at this time, Abu Sufyan was also in Syria, having taken his mercantile caravan there. The Kaiser summoned him to his court, and enquired of him about the Prophet. In reply to the various questions put to him, Abu Sufyan, though yet in deadly hostility to Islam, testified to the righteousness of the Prophet. The Prophet came, he said, of a high family. His followers were daily growing in number. Never in his life time had an untruth escaped his lips, nor had he ever been guilty of a breach of promise. When a person once embraced his faith, nothing could shake him. His teachings, in a nutshell, were, to worship but one God, not to associate other gods with Him, to say prayers, to lead a life of continence, to tell the truth, and to do good to relations, neighbours, and fellowmen at large. The Kaiser was much impressed with the account given by Abu Sufyan, an opponent of Islam. He had also seen a significant vision about the matter. So he called a conference of the prominent

priests of his kingdom, and tried to win them over to his view of Islam, the adoption of which, he persuaded them to helieve, would promote their welfare. When, however, he found that they all disliked the idea of denouncing their old creed, he pacified their resentment by assuring them that he only wanted to test their constancy to their own faith. Obviously, he could ill-afford to set the whole of the Church against him. Thus he did not make an open confession, and passed away in the same state.

This epistle to the Kaiser, in common with the others, contained the Quránic verse quoted at the top of this chapter. It calls upon the people of the Book to accept what is common between their faith and Islam—that they should only worship one God, make no associate with Him, nor should they deify men like themselves. In fact, the verse invites attention to the principle, which if adopted to-day, will put an end to all religious strifes, welding the various systems into one Universal Religion, and humanity into one Universal Brotherhood. To eliminate all differences, it lays down that whatever is common to all the religions should be accepted by all, as a basis to start with, and then build upon the same, such details of religion as are in perfect harmony with this fundamental truth. In this way, all the religions of the world can meet on a common ground and settle their disputes in an amicable manner. The idea of an eclectic religion which has of late sprung up, is but in accordance with the same truth, which was advocated over thirteen centuries ago.

The despatch to the Chosroes was carried by Abdullah-bin-Huzafa. It opened with the words: "In the name of Allah, the Beneficient, the Merciful," followed by the

words "From Muhammad." The Chosroes could not tolerate that anymeone else in the world should have his name placed above his. He was enraged at the word Muhammad put above his own name. He raved at the Prophet, and tore up the letter to pieces. In this fit of anger, he sent orders to the governor of Yaman to arrest the Prophet. Accordingly, the Governor, Bazan by name, sent two men to Medina for the purpose. The Arabs had little weight in the eyes of these people. It was a commonplace thing for their soldiers to arrest any of the Arabs. These men, arriving at Medina, delivered their word to the Prophet, who surprised them with the news that their King, the Chosroes, was himself no more. They went back, and to their grief, they learnt that the very night the Prophet uttered these words, the Chosroes was assassinated by his own son. This event led to the conversion of the Governor. The Province of Yaman threw off the yoke of the Persian Empire, which broke up into parts before long.

The Negus of Abyssinia, no sooner did he receive the Prophet's epistle, than he accepted Islam at the hands of Ja'far, the Muslim refugee who was still there.

Of the epistles sent to the Arab chiefs, the one addressed to Shurahbil-bin-'Amru of Busra on the Syrian border is of special note. He killed, against all laws of inter-tribal morality, the messenger, Haris-bin-'Umair—an act which was an open declaration of war against Islam, and was taken as such by the Muslims. It would have been unwise to allow them any leisure to gather all their forces to fall upon the Muslims. An army of 3000 strong was forthwith collected to advance against the enemy.

Zaid, the liberated slave of the Prophet, was given the command, which is a typical illustration of the fundamental equality between man and man, which Islam inculcates. The proud men of Quraishite descent and the noble Helpers, all were placed under a slave. The Prophet in person accompanied the army up to the place called Saniyyat-ul-Wida'. Shurahbil too had in the meantime raised a large army 100000 strong. The Kaiser was also making preparations for war. The armies met at Muta after which the battle is named. Zaid falling in the action, Ja'far took the command. He too fought desperately and was killed, receiving as many as ninety wounds. He was succeeded by Abdullah-bin-Rawaha, who was also slain. All this succession of command had been pre-arranged by the Prophet himself; such was his habit of thoroughness. After this Khalid was chosen as the commander, who very skilfully saved his small army, which was insignificant as compared with the vast hosts of the enemy. This battle took place in the month of Jamadi 1, in the year 8 A.H.

Under what circumstances were all these epistles issued to the various sovereigns, is a point worth consideration. Should the Prophet have done so after the subjugation of the whole of Arabia, it could have been regarded as a measure inspired by ambition. But what was the state of things actually obtaining at the time? Twelve months before Medina had been besieged, and there was little hope of the survival of a single Muslim soul. Even now the Muslims were too weak to make their way to Mecca to perforce such an important religious duty as the pilgrimage. The non-Muslims were still in power, so much so that they had

just dictated terms to the Muslims. On all sides in Arabia, Islam was surrounded by enemies, and the sprinkling of Muslims here and there did not count for much. Yet in the face of all these depressing circumstances, the Prophet's faith in the ultimate triumph of Islam was never for a moment shaken. He had full confidence that Islam would prevail in the long run, and could foresee the day when its light would illumine every nook and corner of the world. Despite such weakness, the Prophet invites the mighty potentates of the world to accept the faith. Such was his deep-rooted conviction in the force of Truth. Herein lies a useful lesson for those Muslims of the day who are sceptical as to the success of the propagation of Islam in the West, for they think there is no mighty empire to back it up. Truth does not depend upon force for its maintenance. It is in itself potent enough to hold its own. For the anti-Islamic critic as well, the point is worth consideration. Is it possible for an impostor to have such a firm faith in his final success? Let those who are inclined to attribute these ambitious despatches to a perverted mentality ponder over the phenomenal success which followed only a few years later. If these facts point out that Muhammad was neither an impostor nor an imbecile, then there is but one conclusion irresistibly forced upon an unbiassed critic—that he was a Prophet of God. These epistles establish also the fact that from its very inception, the Prophet looked upon Islam as a cosmopolitan religion. In the case of Christianity, universality has not been claimed. Jesus himself lays no claim to such a position. He clearly said that he had come for the lost sheep of Israel. Nay, he even

refused the favour of a prayer to a non-Israelite woman. But Muhammad, peace be on him, on the contrary, proclaimed from the very inauguration of his dispensation that it was meant for the whole of mankind. It was not an empty claim. He spared no pains to realize the ideal in his own lifetime, inviting the various monarchs to accept the truth of Islam.

These epistles were despatched in the year 7 A. H. They all bore the seal of the Prophet, with the words "Muhammad, the Apostle of Allah." Certain reports mention also the order in which these words were engraved on the seal. At the top came "Allah", at the bottom "Muhammad," and between the two, "Apostle." The letter to Mukoukas, which has now come to light, bears the same impression as has been described in the refort.

At the close of this very year, 7 A.H., the Prophet went, as stipulated in the truce of Hudaibiyya, on Pilgrimage to the Ka'ba. And this same year, the remaining Muslim refugees in Abyssinia came over to Medina.

CHAPTER XXII

THE CONQUEST OF MECCA

> "There shall be no reproof against you this day; Allah may forgive you and He is the most Merciful of the merciful."
>
> (The Holy Qurán, XII, 92.)

THE aggressions of the Quraish reached their climax. The eighth year after the Flight was drawing to a close. The truce of Hudaibiyya had been in force for about two years. The restoration of an atmosphere of peace had proved marvellously favourable to the growth of Islam. The Quraish could no longer view with a complacent mind the daily growing power of Islam. At last they contravened the truce. The tribe of Khuza'a, availing itself of the discretion allowed by the truce of Hudaibiyya, had entered into alliance with the Muslims, while their hereditary enemies, the Banu Bakr, had become the partisans of the Meccans. It so happened that the Banu Bakr, one night, fell upon the Khuza'a. The Quraish chiefs helped the former. The Khuza'a sought shelter within the precincts of the *Haram,* where bloodshed was strictly forbidden according to Arab traditions. But even there they were not spared. Many of them were put to the sword. The Quraish not only did not prevent their allies from aggression, but actively helped them to the utter disregard of the terms of the truce of Hudaibiyya. Consequently a deputation of the Khuza'a came to Medina to ask the Prophet to rise in their defence,

as required by the terms of the alliance. The Prophet thereupon sent word to the Quraish telling them to accept either of these three conditions—that they should pay blood-money for those slain among the Khuza'a; or that they should dissociate themselves from the Banu Bakr; or that they should declare the truce of Hudaibiyya as null and void. In reply, the Quraish said they accepted the last one, though, later on, Abu Sufyan tried to gloss over this imprudent step on the part of his people. Abu Sufyan realized that such a glaring breach of agreement was fraught with grave danger, and consequently came to Medina for a renewal of the truce. The Prophet, however, could see through the trick, for Abu Sufyan turned a deaf ear to all the Muslim demands. Hence the Prophet refused a renewal, and he had to return to Mecca with his designs frustrated.

The Prophet accordingly made preparations for an expedition against Mecca, summoning together all the tribes that were in alliance with the Muslims. For twenty-one long years the Quraish had been tyrannizing over the Muslims. Thrice had they attacked Medina to extirpate Islam and the Muslims. One would have judged from these preparations, that the oppressors would now be duly punished for their offences. And it was but natural to expect that the people who had perpetrated cold-blooded crimes against Islam, should be duly brought to book. A certain Muslim, Hatib, anxious on account of his relations in Mecca, secretly despatched a letter by a messenger to apprise them of the contemplated Muslim incursion. Had it reached its destination, the Meccans would have also made preparations to oppose the Muslims. But Divine purpose had ordained that this great conquest

should be carried out, without any blood-shed. The Prophet was informed of Hatib's letter. Men were despatched at once to arrest its bearer, who was overtaken and brought back with the letter. It caused great excitement among the Muslims against Hatib, who had attempted to betray his fellow-Muslims. He was arrested and brought up for judgment. But the judgment was to be pronounced by no worldly king, or general, who would have ordered the instantaneous death of the culprit. Nor was the expedition an expedition of revenge. It was intended to be an imperishable example of forgiveness—forgiveness shown to deadly enemies. How could Hatib who had been all along a friend be treated otherwise? His excuse was accepted and he was forgiven.

At last, at the head of ten thousand righteous followers, the Prophet set out for Mecca, on the tenth of Ramazan, 8 A.H., and thus found fulfilment the Divine words announced two thousand years before through the lips of Moses, "He came with ten thousands of holy ones" (Deut. 33, 2). Post-Mosaic history cannot point to any other event ful-filling these prophetic words. What a marvellous phenomenon! The Muslims count ten thousand strong and are at the same time all "righteous" as foretold. Their object in life was in no way warfare and bloodshed but the establishment of righteousness even though it were at the expense of their own blood. They encamped at a place Marr-uz-Zahran, a day's journey from Mecca. The whole body of Muslims was directed to make fire in each camp. This might impress the Quraish with the numerical strength of the Muslim force, and thus obviate armed resistance on their

part with the consequent bloodshed. The Meccans surrendered without resistance.

The foremost of the Quraish brought before the Prophet, was strange to say, no other than Abu Sufyan, the head of the opposition after Abu Jahl. Time and again he had been doing his utmost to eradicate Islam. An arch-offender like Abu Sufyan was presented to be pardoned! It appeared simply impossible. But the Prophet's merciful nature made no distinction between friend and foe. Abu Sufyan was granted pardon. A year and a half before, when called upon at the court of the Kaiser to testify to the character of the Prophet, it seemed as though the truth of Islam had already made its way into his heart. Now, his own utter helplessness notwithstanding all his power, the final triumph of Islam in spite of its want of resources, and above all the generous forgiveness of the Prophet—all these considerations convinced him of the inherent force of Islam. The heart which had remained sealed against Islam for twenty long years, now opened to the truth, and Abu Sufyan embraced the faith.

Impressed with the strength of the Muslim force, Abu Sufyan hastened back to inform his people that any resistance would be futile. At the same time he delivered them the Prophet's word, guaranteeing safety to all those who should enter Abu Sufyan's house, or close the doors of their own houses, or enter the Ka'ba. The critics stigmatizing Islam as a religion of the sword will be disappointed that conversion to Islam formed no part of the conditions of security. At last the Muslim army advanced on the city from various directions. One detachment was under the command of Sa'd-bin-'Ubada. The

latter, when he passed by Abu Sufyan, shouted: "To-day is the day of fighting. It is not a day of safety for Mecca." This displeased the Prophet, who took the standard from him and entrusted it to his son, Qais, in order to avoid bloodshed. Khalid was to enter that part of the town which was the stronghold of the worst enemies of Islam. It was the people of this part that had participated in the attack on the Khuza'a. Among these lived 'Ikrama, the son of Abu Jahl. Notwithstanding the proclamation of general security guaranteed to all citizens, these people would not let Khalid pass smoothly, but, on the contrary met his army with a shower of arrows. Khalid was thus constrained to attack them. The casualties that took place in the skirmish are reported to have been from thirteen to twenty-eight on the side of the enemy and two on that of the Muslims. The Prophet in the meantime had reached a rising ground of the town and was much shocked on seeing the swords of Khalid's men flashing at the further end. Had he not issued strict orders, he exclaimed, that there should be no bloodshed on any account? Khalid was then called upon to account for this act of seeming disobedience, but the explanation was found quite reasonable.

Then the Prophet proceeded towards the Ka'ba and purefied this sacred house of all idols. As he touched each idol with his stick he recited this verse of the Holy Qurán revealed long since: "Say, the Truth has come and falsehood has vanished. Verily, falsehood is but evanescent."[1] Never thereafter, did an image or an idol find its way into the holy precincts of this house,

[1] 17 : 81.

dedicated to the Oneness of God. Then he turned to the "place of Abraham" and offered his prayers there. 'Usman-bin-Talha, the key-bearer of the Ka'ba, was then sent for; the house was opened and entering therein, the Prophet said his prayers there as well. The key was then returned to 'Usman with the words that the charge of the sanctuary shall ever remain with him and his descendants.

This done, the Prophet delivered a sermon urging the unity of God and the Universal Brotherhood of man. Thereafter he addressed a special gathering of the Quraish. They were before him in the capacity of offenders. What tortures had they inflicted upon the Muslims! It seemed as if the very soil of Mecca was thirsting for the Muslims' blood. What horrible pains the Muslims were put to, to the disregard of all moral and traditional laws! The very recollection of the fantastic forms of persecutions sends a thrill into one's heart. Again, their high-handedness was not merely confined to the soil of Mecca, but they pursued the Muslims wherever they fled to take shelter. Repeated attacks were led against Medina to smash them. So heinous was the guilt of the Meccans now standing for justice before the Prophet! Malicious, vindictive, destroyers of the fundamental rights of man, oppressors of the innocent, the Meccans deserved the most exemplary punishment under the most humane law. The mildest form of punishment would have been to put the ring-leaders to the sword, and imprison a number of others, to serve as a warning and a lesson for the future. Their power should have been utterly crushed so as to incapacitate them to create any trouble

in the future. The most civilized way of dealing with such-like offences is to mete out exemplary punishment to some of the offending party, whether really guilty or not. And the rest are reduced to a state of abject servility. This has been the treatment ever accorded to the vanquished foe by the victors, and the same is the method of dealing with a subject people to-day, under the most civilized governments. Strong is the instinct of revenge in the nature of man, and it is apt to run riot, particularly when the foe lies at one's sole mercy. Then it transgresses all moral limits. But the Quraish had an implicit faith in the noble and merciful nature of the Prophet. They never expected harsh treatment at his hands. So, when the Prophet asked them what treatment they anticipated, they replied, "Thou art a noble brother, and the son of a noble brother." They were not unfamiliar with the generosity of the Prophet. They were persuaded that the magnanimity, which had distinguished his character during a period of forty years before his claim to be the Prophet, was not in the least changed. But the treatment he accorded to them exceeded even their own expectations. "This day," he said, "there is no reproof against you." What a generosity! To say nothing of punishment, they are exempted even from reproach for their black crimes. Not even a pledge as to their future behaviour was demanded from them. The property of the exiled Refugees, which the Meccans had taken possession of, was not recovered from them. The Refugees were asked to forego all their previous rights. Even at the time of the entry into the town, 'Ikrama, Abu Jahl's son, could not refrain from making mischief and attacked Khalid's detachment.

Apprehensive of heavy punishment which he knew he deserved, he fled for his life elsewhere. In a state of great distress, his wife came to the Prophet, and asked for forgiveness on behalf of her husband. Illimitable as the Prophet's mercy was, such an enemy as 'Ikrama was also granted pardon. To Wahshi, the murderer of Hamza, the Prophet's dear uncle, and to Hinda who had chewed his liver, was also extended this general clemency. Habbar, who had pelted the Prophet's daughter while on her way from Mecca to Medina so badly that the injuries led ultimately to her death, was also forgiven. World history fails to produce the like of the Prophet's generous forgiveness of such arch-criminals. Truly, the Prophet richly deserves all the titles given to him, such as the "Best of Humanity", the "Pride of Mankind" and the "Mercy for the Nations". It costs little to harp upon homilies of forgiveness, but it requires a great measure of magnanimity to pardon one's own tormentors, especially when they are at one's mercy. This breadth of human sympathy and the magnanimous forgiveness is not met with in the life of Christ. Nay, he had no occasion to exercise the quality of forgiveness, for he never acquired power to deal with his persecutors.

Mecca was conquered, but what was a far greater conquest and was beyond the reach of the Muslims' arms, was accomplished by the general amnesty granted to the denizens of the town. It captivated the hearts of the people. Even enemies of Abu Sufyan's bitterness had been impressed with Islamic morals. This final scene of Islamic magnanimity disarmed all opposition. The Meccans witnessed with their own eyes how all those Divine

promises held out to the Muslims, while the latter were yet groaning under the tortures of their enemies, had at last come true. The combined forces of opposition could do little harm to Islam. This furnished a conclusive testimony to the righteousness of the cause, and removed whatever doubt was still lurking in their hearts. To-day, when Islam is once more in the throes of hard times, when the enemies are bent upon its extirpation, nay, when all the powers of the world have combined to sweep it off the face of the earth, it seems as though Divine power will once more manifest itself, even as it did in the days of yore, so as to convince the world that human hands are too weak to crush Divine Truth. In brief, all opposition vanished. The Truth of Islam went deep down into the Meccans' hearts. They came into the fold, in flocks. The Prophet seated himself on a prominent place on the Mount Safa to receive them into the Muslim Brotherhood. Males were followed by females, who also embraced the faith in large numbers. All these conversions were spontaneous. There was not a single instance of conversion by force. There were also some who did not accept Islam,—but not the slightest molestation was caused to them on that account. They still clung to their own idolatrous creed, but the Muslims treated them very kindly. Friendly relations existed between them, so much so, that they fought shoulder to shoulder with the Muslims at the ensuing battle of Hunain. Thus the conquest of Mecca is a conclusive refutation of the charge that Islam was ever propagated at the point of the sword; for could there be a more favourable opportunity for such conversion? Not a single instance of compulsion, however, can be

pointed out on this occasion. Here is Muir's own confession on the point:

"Although the city had cheerfully accepted his authority, all its inhabitants had not yet embraced the new religion, nor formally acknowledged his prophetical claim. Perhaps he intended to follow the course he had pursued at Medina, and leave the conversion of the people to be gradually accomplished without compulsion."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE BATTLE OF HUNAIN

> "Certainly Allah helped you on many battle fields and on the day of Hunain, when your great numbers made you vain, but they availed you nothing, and the earth became strait to you, notwithstanding its spaciousness, then you turned back retreating." (The Holy Qurán, IX, 25.)

SCARCELY a month had elapsed since the Prophet had left Medina, when intelligence was brought to him that the tribe of Hawazin, occupying the slopes to the east of Mecca, was gathering in great numbers to undertake an offensive against the Muslims. The growth of Islam after the truce of Hudaibiyya had already made them restless. Long before the conquest of Mecca, they had been stirring the Bedouin tribes to rise against Islam. Now with the fall of Mecca, they thought they must take the earliest opportunity to strike a blow at Islam, lest it should grow too strong for them. A warlike people as they were, it took them but a few days to muster strong. The Prophet on being apprised of these preparations despatched an official to find out if the report was true. On his return, he confirmed the news. The Prophet forthwith set himself to the drawing up of an army to scatter the Hawazin forces. Ten thousand strong were already there round the Muslim standard; two thousand volunteers came forward from among the Meccans to swell the number to twelve thousand, at the

head of which the Prophet marched towards the valley of Hunain, where the Hawazin had assembled. In addition to man-power, a good deal of equipment was also supplied by the Meccans. The numerical strength coupled with the full equipment turned the heads of some of the Muslims. But God willed to show that Islamic conquests were due merely to Divine help, and were in no way the outcome of the strength of Muslim arms. There were fields where the Muslims had, with Allah's help, routed an enemy three, four, nay, even ten times their number. But at the breaking-out of hostilities on the field of Hunain, the Muslims had to experience a set-back, notwithstanding their numbers and equipment. Undue pride in their own power had crept into the hearts of some. But Allah did not like them feel conceited; He would rather have them ever look upon Him as the only mainstay of their strength. The Holy Qurán depicts the scene in the words quoted at the opening of this chapter.

The Hawazin were skilled in archery. Besides, they had occupied every point of vantage. They had posted the flower of their archery on the various hills. The Muslims had to take up a disadvantageous position. Showers of arrows poured down upon them from all sides, while the main army fell upon them from the front. Khalid was leading the van of the Muslim army. Under his command were placed the Meccan auxiliaries, including the non-Muslims. They were the foremost to face the brunt of the battle, but could not withstand the fierceness of the onslaught. Their retreat caused confusion throughout the Muslim ranks. All fell back in utter disorder. Even the detachments of the Refugees

and the Helpers joined the general retreat. The Prophet, with 'Abbas and a few others, was left entirely exposed to the advancing enemy hosts. He saw the Muslim army turn back, but firmly kept to his dangerous post with marvellous equanimity. The enemy was fast sweeping upon him, and he was almost all alone, but that did not cause the faintest ripple on the serenity of his mind. Was he not secure under the Omniscient protection of the Mightiest of the Mighty? The same unfailing source of solace—unswerving faith in Divine help and implicit conviction in the final triumph of his cause—sustained him now as usual. Keeping single-handed to the field, with the enemy storm whirling along on to him, he shouted repeatedly at the top of his voice: "I am the Prophet; there is no untruth in it. I am the son of Abdul Muttalib." 'Abbas also called out with his stentorian voice: "O hosts of Helpers! O the companions of the tree!" "Labbaik," i. e., "Here we are at thy command," was the reply from all sides, as the scattered forces rallied to the Prophet. Jumping off their horses and camels, the Muslims fell upon the advancing foe in such a fury that the latter could not keep ground. A portion took to flight, and another offered resistance for some time. But on the fall of their standard-bearer, they also took to their heels.

While marching out towards the field, the commander of the Hawazin, Malik, an impetuous young men of thirty, had ordered that females and children should accompany the forces. Their presence, he thought, would keep up their spirits and prevent them, if hard pressed, from turning their backs. However, when the fateful hour came, they left everything—women, children, cattle and all,

The booty that fell into the Muslims' hands consisted of twenty-four thousand sheep, and four thousand ounces of silver. Besides, six thousand of them were taken prisoner. Having taken the booty to a place of security, the Muslim army advanced further. A part of the defeated army took shelter in their stronghold of Autas, whither the Prophet despatched a handful of Muslims to scatter them. The main body secured themselves within the walls of Taif, well-fortified with battlements. They were skilled in the art of warfare, and well conversant with the use of up-todate weapons of fighting such as the catapult. They had also stored a year's provision within the walls and posted strong garrisons all round. The Prophet pushed straightway thither and laid siege to the town. With the help of certain tribes, the Muslim army also made use of the new weapons. The siege dragged on. At last the Prophet conferred with his friends. An experienced Bedouin chief made a significant observation that the fox had entered into its den and could not be caught very quickly; if, however, left alone, it could do little injury. Being assured that the enemy was no longer capable of doing any harm to the Muslims, the Prophet ordered the siege to be raised; for, the protection of Islam from hostile attack was the only object of the whole expedition. While retiring, the Prophet was asked to invoke Divine wrath on the foe. This was the very place where the Prophet was once pelted to bleeding. But this was the prayer he asked Allah on their behalf, "O my Lord! Grant light to the tribe of Saqif and bring them to me," i. e. to Islam. The prayer was granted and before long these people voluntarily accepted Islam. This is another illustration of the Prophet's deep love for mankind.

Was this expedition undertaken with a view to propagate his faith? If, as alleged, this was the object of the Prophet's wars, why at all did he raise the siege? Was it because the situation was hopeless? No! a few days more of siege, and the enemy would have surrendered. Why did he leave them un-subjugated and unconverted? Did not the Prophet understand the Qurânic verse which enjoins: "And fight with them, till there is no persecution, and religion shall be only for Allah."[1] If the words, "religion shall be only for Allah," implied the establishment of Islam, as it is mis-interpreted today, why did the Prophet contravene the clear Divine injunction, in accepting the terms of the truce of Hudaibiyya, on the occasion of the conquest of Mecca, and now again in raising the siege of Taif? But as a matter of fact the Prophet understood the true import of the Divine commandment. The cessation of persecution meant no more than that the Muslims might no longer be persecuted for their accepting Islam. And the words "religion shall be only for Allah," required only the establishment of religious freedom. Man must be free, to choose any religion he likes; for it is an affair between man and his Creator. This and nothing more than this is meant by the words "religion shall be only for Allah." This was the reason why the Prophet directed the siege to be raised, as soon as he was convinced that the enemy could no longer injure the Muslims. Moreover, the Muslim army on this occasion included non-Muslim Meccans as well. If propagation was the object, the foremost to have felt the edge of the Muslim sword should have been these very men. This shows clearly that the battle of

[1] 2 : 193.

Hunain was like all others, a measure of national defence. The Prophet no doubt made incursion on the enemy but only after the latter had started an offensive against Islam and when Muslim security was threatened. As soon as their forces were scattered and no more trouble was apprehended from them, hostilities were forthwith stopped. To say nothing of religious propagation, even if territorial aggrandizement were the end in view, the Prophet would not have returned without subjugating Taif. This shows that not even this was the object of the Prophet's wars, still less the propagation of religion.

On his return from Taif, the Prophet divided the booty among the Muslim rank and file, setting apart as usual, one fifth for the national treasury. Among the captives was also his foster-sister, Shaima. She was brought before him, and as soon as he recognised her, he spread his own mantle for her to seat herself upon, and showed her, kindness and consideration. Shaima was not his real sister. But never was even a real sister better honoured. Then he persuaded her to accompany him to Medina, but she said she would rather stay among her own people. So she was sent off with handsome presents.

A deputation of the Saqif waited upon the Prophet for the purpose of securing the release of the prisoners. The spokesman laid all the troubles of his people before him. What would have been the reply of a most civilized modern conqueror? "I quite realize your difficulties. But now it is too late. You should have thought of it before taking an offensive against us, to crush our power. Had you won the struggle, you would have treated us even worse." Is not this the typical reply with which

the entreaties of a vanquished foe are rejected in these days of civilization? But the Prophet's heart was cast in a nobler mould. His mercy knew no bounds. The enemy had as good a claim on the Prophet's extensive mercy as any other human being. The Prophet's heart would melt at the smallest human misery. How could he bear the sight of the sufferings of thousands? At once he ordered the release of the prisoners that had fallen to his own and his family's share. But, he said, he could not interfere with the rights of other individuals who were entitled to dispose of their shares of the prisoners as they would choose. What a splendid example of the equality of human rights! Surely, those who had been cheerfully sacrificing their wealth, their property, nay, even their lives for him, would not dream of denying him the privilege of setting at large their prisoners. But it was not for the Prophet who had come to establish human equality to encroach upon the free exercise of others' rights. A king, an over-lord, has no right, in Islam, on an individual's property. But at the same time, his heart was aching within him, on account of those woe-stricken people. He was anxious to help them out of their distress. He told them to call on him again at the time of afternoon prayers, and he would commend their request to the Muslim congregation for a sym pathetic consideration. Accordingly, they came at the fixed hour, and the release of six thousand prisoners was secured through the intercession of the Prophet. The event stands unique in the annals of the world. To a delegation consisting of idolaters, interceding on behalf of idolaters, accorded such a generous treatment! Even the mystifying glasses of Christian prejudice fail to account for these

six thousand prisoners being set free without the stipulation of conversion to Islam. It is so painful to see one who was the embodiment of mercy and tenderheartedness portrayed as a blood-thirsty murderer , with the Qurán in one hand and a sword dangling in the other, to strike off the head of the reluctant to accept the Book.

The booty having been distributed, the Prophet made generous grants to certain Quraishite and Bedouin chiefs, out of the share set apart for the Public Treasury. This gave rise to suppressed murmurs amongst some of the youngsters among the Helpers. The Prophet, they grumbled, had been partial to his own kinsmen in the distribution of the booty. How ruthlessly an autocrat would have dealt with such insolence, can easily be imagined. But the Prophet sent for the Helpers and spoke to them in a very kindly manner. "I have been told," said he, "that you are dissatisfied at my ostensible partiality towards the Quraish chiefs." Brought up under the influence of the Prophet himself, the Helpers had the moral courage to tell the plain truth. "Yes," they replied, "there are some amongst us who are talking like that.' Then the Prophet said, "Is it not true, that I came in your midst while you were misguided; so Allah guided you to the right path. You were indigent; Allah made you prosperous. You were ever at daggers drawn with one another; Allah created mutual affection in your hearts." The Helpers replied that all that was true. "You could also give me a different reply, and you would be quite ustified in doi ng that," continued the Prophet, "you could say that I came over to you when I was belied and rejected by my own people, and you accepted me. I came to you when I had no one to help me, and you

stood by me. I was turned out of my home, and you gave me shelter. O Helpers! Did it make you suspicious that I gave away a portion of worldly pelf for the purpose of conciliation, thinking that Islam was already an ample reward for you. O Helpers! Do you not like that you should take home with you the Apostle of Allah, while others may drive goats and camels to their homes. By Allah, who holds my soul in His hands, if all the people should go one way, while the Helpers take another, I will tread along the path of the Helpers." This spontaneous outburst of the Prophet's heart shows how little weight worldly riches carried with him. The audience were deeply moved, many of them bursting into tears of joy, knowing that they were to be accompanied by the Prophet himself and thus were all the wealthier for it.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE GENERAL SPREAD OF ISLAM IN ARABIA

> "He it is who sent His Apostle with the guidance and the true religion that He might make it prevail over all the religions."
>
> (The Holy Qurán, XLVIII, 28.)

On his way back from Taif in the month of Zu-Qad in the year 8 A.H., the Prophet visited Mecca, and having performed *'Umra*, or minor pilgrimage, returned to Medina about the close of the year.

Mecca was known as *Umm-ul-Qura,* or the mother of towns, and though it was not the temporal capital of the island, it commanded the spiritual allegiance of the whole of Arabia. During the pilgrimage months, people flocked here, year after year, from every part of the country. Naturally the people of Mecca had a great influence upon the island, which looked upon the Quraish as leaders in the matter of faith. Formerly when at the pilgrimage occasion, the Prophet preached to a tribe, he would invariably meet with the reply that he should first convince his own people. Consequently, when, after the fall of Mecca, the inhabitants of the town joined the Muslim brotherhood in large numbers, it made a marvellous impression on the general populace of Arabia. Besides, they witnessed with their own eyes how the Prophet, single-handed as he was, and discarded on all hands, had at last triumphed, in the very teeth of op-

position. The truth became manifest, with the result that people began to join Islam. This is the reason why in the years 9 and 10 A. H. Islam spread all over Arabia. This period of the general acceptance of Islam began with the year 9 A. H., when tribe after tribe declared its adherence. During the same year the Prophet organized the collecting of the poorrate from all the tribes within the fold of Islam. A separate establishment was organised for this purpose and collectors were sent out to various places. The payment of the poor-rate is obligatory on every Muslim. The tax, being the main item to replenish the *Bait-ul-Mal* or the Public Treasury, was controlled by the central authority. Once the tax-collectors visited a certain tribe, and realised a flock of sheep and cattle, which was usurped by a neighbouring non-Muslim tribe. 'Uyaina, a chief of the Muslim tribe, made an attack on them, by way of reprisal, taking fifty prisoners.

The Banu Tamim had rendered assistance to the Prophet in the battle of Hunain. They sent a deputation to Medina to wait upon the Prophet. A controversy was held here between the speakers and poets of both sides. But the Banu Tamim had to admit the superiority of the Muslim speaker and poet, whose one theme was now no other than Islam. This made a considerable impression on them, and having already been in close contact with the Muslims, they made up their mind to join Islam. In a word, Islam was spreading rapidly. The only hindrance was the old-standing prejudice. So wherever this disappeared, Islam took its foothold.

During this period, some mischief making tendencies were manifested by the Banu Tayy. Ali, at the head of

200 mounted soldiers, was commissioned to suppress them. Among those who were taken prisoner, was also the daughter of Hatim Tai, a man famed for his generosity. Her name was Saffana. When the Prophet came to know of it, he sent for her and wished that she should be set free with all respect and honour. But the worthy daughter of an illustrious father, did not like to avail herself alone of the privilege. So long as her fellow female prisoners were not liberated, she would rather remain in captivity, she said, than enjoy her freedom. Her request was granted and all the prisoners were set at large. Her brother had run away for his life towards Syria. She went thither in search of him and informed him of the breadth of the Prophet's sympathies. He immediately came to the Prophet, accepted Islam, and was restored to the chieftaincy of his tribe.

During these days, Ka'b-bin-Zuhair, a famous poet, who was once a bitter opponent of Islam, came into the fold, and composed the well-known eulogy, called Burda, in praise of the Prophet. The eulogy has immortalised his name.

By this time, Islam had won general popularity throughout Arabia. The news of its final triumph spread far and wide to the distant corners of the island. The people were not altogether unaware of what had so long been passing between the Prophet and the Quraish. They had been eagerly watching the whole course of the struggle. They knew how the Quraish tormented him and his followers for their preaching virtue and the Oneness of God, and how after their flight to Medina, attempts were made for eight long years to crush them. Those who attended the annual gatherings

on the pilgrimage occasion carried these news to the distant corners of the country. The people were also aware of the Prophet's prophecy that all opposition to Islam would ultimately vanish. Hence deputations began to pour into Medina from every part. The Prophet received them with great honour, and taught them the principles of Islam with the utmost kindness. With those who embraced the faith a teacher was sent in order to instruct them in the religion. Thus, in the first half of this very year, delegations from far-off places like Yaman, Hazramaut, Bahrain, 'Umman, the Syrian and Persian borders, called at Medina. What a perversion of facts! Ignorance and prejudice attribute the spread of Islam to the instrumentality of the sword. While the fact is that the progress of Islam was at a standstill so long as a state of warfare prevailed. As soon as settled conditions of peace were restored, Islam spread by leaps and bounds on all sides. It seemed as though some unseen power was at work in bringing hosts after hosts within the fold of Islam. Never was a military expedition sent to any of the places whence these deputations came. This is a fact which has, by an irony of fate, been to this day intentionally misrepresented. Religious freedom and peace have ever favoured and will ever favour the spread of Islam.

CHAPTER XXV

THE BATTLE OF TABUK

> "Had it been a near advantage and a short journey, they would certainly have followed thee, but the tedious journey was too long for them."
> (The Holy Qurán, IX, 42.)

THE rise of Islam in the land of Arabia alarmed the neighbouring Christian state. She viewed with a jealous eye this rapid growth of Islam. Their sympathies had always ranged on the side of the Jews and the Christians, as opposed to the idolaters and fire worshippers. At the time when the Persian hosts, sweeping over the Asiatic possessions of the Roman Empire as well as Egypt, were at the very gates of Constantinople and the fateful hour was plain in sight, the Holy Qurán prophesied that the Roman Empire would overpower Persia within a period of nine years; "I am Allah, the best Knower. The Romans are vanquished in a near land and they, after being vanquished, shall overcome within a few years . . . and on that day the believers shall rejoice."[1] Accordingly when the Muslims won a victory at Badr, the same year the Roman Empire recovering her lost territory, and dashed right into the very boundaries of Persia. But the Roman Empire could not tolerate the growing power of Islam. A skirmish had once already taken place at Muta. Now that the news reached Syria that the whole of Arabia was giving allegiance to Islam, the religious jealousy of

[1] 22 : 4.

the Christians was aroused. They had cherished the hope of converting Arabia to their faith. They thought an attack upon the island would at least hamper the spread of Islam. Intelligence was received that the Kaiser had assembled a large force to smash the power of Islam, and that all the Christian tribes in Arabia had joined hands with him. The tribes of Ghassan were particularly a source of danger to the peace of Arabia. On the strength of this information, the Prophet directed despatch of an expedition to the border of Syria. The Holy Qurán enjoins fortification of borders, as a safeguard against a sudden incursion. Spiritually the Prophet spared no pains in protecting his people from all possible attacks of the Evil One. But even physically, he was not less wide-awake to take every precaution to ensure their safety. He therefore, could not lightly set aside the incessant news as to the vast preparations of the Kaiser for the extirpation of Islam. The best method of self-defence was to keep the enemy outside the boundaries of Arabia, and hence the necessity of sending an expedition to the frontier. The Prophet summoned all the tribes to come to the defence of their motherland. The impending danger was threatening the peace of the whole of Arabia. But there were a number of obstacles that stood in the way. The journey was long, and the weather burning hot. The crops were ripe and ready for the sickle; and above all, the fear of facing the well-disciplined and trained forces of the Roman Empire lurked in many hearts. Besides, such a long journey could not be undertaken on foot. There were many who could not afford to provide themselves with horses or camels, nor could the Prophet afford to make such arrangements for

them. At this juncture 'Usman offered one thousand camels and ten thousand dinars for the expedition. An army of 30000 strong was equipped, and it marched out of Medina in the month of Rajab 9 A.H. When on their way they came upon the place Hijr, the habitation of the Samood, the Prophet directed them to march swiftly by the scene of the Samood's destruction, thereby inculcating the lesson that a Muslim should have nothing to do with a people who had transgressed the commandments of the Lord.

Midway between Medina and Damascus, at a distance of fourteen days' journey from the former, lies the place known as Tabuk. Here encamped the Muslim army, and awaited the news of the enemy. It seems that the present Muslim strength coupled with a recollection of the daring of the three thousand in facing a hundred thousand on a previous occasion at Muta, damped the spirits of the tribes of Ghassan, Lakhm, Juzam and others. The Kaiser too dropped the idea of an attack. When the Prophet got to the border, he found it quite peaceful. If conversion was to be secured, as alleged in season and out of season, at the point of the sword, could there be a more promising opportunity? Thirty thousand men, well equipped and daring and devoted, were there at the Prophet's bidding. Before him lay a vast field for the gratification of his proselytizing greed, if he had any. But not a single conversion is reported as an outcome of this stupendous expedition. Even if he had a passion for territorial aggrandizement, could there be a more favourable opportunity? He had undergone the hardships of a long and tedious journey in the trying climate of the Arabian summer. At last

he had got to the very gates of the enemy's country, whom he found unprepared to offer any resistance. Just a dash onward into Syria lying before him and a large tract of rich land was undoubtedly his. But his heart was as free from passion for territorial conquest as for conversion by force. Despite all this expense and trouble, when he felt satisfied after a halt of twenty days that there was no cause for apprehension, he returned in accordance with the Qurânic injunction which says, "And fight in the path of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not transgress."[1] The enemy did not want to fight. How could the Prophet fight with him? Accordingly certain agreements were concluded with a number of petty Christian states, and peace was secured on the border.

[1] 2 : 190.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE HYPOCRITES

> "If We pardon a party of you, We will chastise another party because they are guilty."
> (The Holy Qurán, IX, 66.)

THOUGH Emigration to Medina gave the Prophet a certain amount of freedom, it increased opposition to his cause tenfold. While at Mecca, the malice of the Quraish found vent in tormenting the Muslims, but now it was bent on the latter's destruction. The Bedouin tribes, that had so far been mere spectators of the Muslims' persecutions, were also stirred at the growth of Islam in Medina. The Jews, being at a distance, were also quiet so far, but now that the Muslims were their next-door neighbours in Medina, they could not watch the steady growth of Islam without a sting, and they rose in opposition. But distinct from all these, and of a queer nature, another wave of opposition set in, in the camp, known as that of *the hypocrites,* in Islamic phraseology. These were the men who had not the pluck to come out into the open. So they joined the faith with the object of undermining it from within. A certain man, 'Abdullah-bin-Ubayy, was at their head. Before the immigration of the Prophet, this man wielded immense power and influence in Medina. The people were thinking of making him their king. But the Prophet's presence eclipsed his personality, and he dwindled into a nonentity. In the beginning he offered some opposition, but beholding

the rapid growth of Islam, he thought hypocrisy would be the best policy. Thus he put on the mask of Islam, and thenceforward till his last breath in the year 9 A. H. he left no stone unturned to bring Islam into trouble. So far as an open enemy is concerned, one can keep on his guard against him, but enemies disguised as friends, are very dangerous to deal with. They lull one into a sense of security by their friendly appearance, and when an opportunity comes they strike a blow all unawares. They also have access to one's inner thoughts which renders them all the more dangerous. They keep in secret contact with one's enemies, apprising them of all his plans and movements. Islam was thus confronted with every conceivable form of opposition and intrigue. Its final triumph is therefore a concrete illustration of the fact that a plant tended by the hand of God himself will survive the worst fury of storms.

The malice of 'Abdullah assumed a manifest form on the occasion of the battle of Uhud. Making sure that the Quraish, 3000 strong, were resolved upon smashing the Muslims, he deserted with his 300 men and returned to Medina. This, he thought, would not only weaken the Muslims' strength of arms, but also their morals, and the Quraish would be able to crush them all the more easily. He also promised to help the Banu Nazir in their mischief against Islam. At the battle of Ahzab when 24000 enemy hosts were laying siege to Medina, the hypocrites did not participate in the defence of the town, on the lame excuse that they had to look after their own houses which were exposed to enemy attacks. On the occasion of the expedition against the Banu Mustaliq, 'Abdullah's malice was once more

brought into play. He made a futile attempt to create a split between the Helpers and the Refugees. On return from this expedition, the same 'Abdullah and his partisans fabricated a grave accusation against the chastity of 'Aysha, the Righteous. On every occasion, they hoped the worst would befall the Muslims. They were ever on the look-out for an opportunity to rise from within, should an enemy from without win the slightest ascendancy over Islam. At the battle of Tabuk, the excessive heat afforded them ample pretext to refrain from enlisting. Their real motive in staying behind was to stir up mischief at Medina in the absence of the Muslims. But all their efforts to injure Islam came to nought.

The ethical and the religious history of the world presents perhaps but one instance of acting up to the idealistic saying "Love thy enemy." The Prophet had nothing but the tenderest treatment to mete out to such dangerous enemies as the hypocrites. He never punished them for their offences. When 'Abdullah's mischief in bringing about a rupture between the Helpers and the Refugees came to light, 'Umar proposed his execution. "I do not like," replied the Prophet, "that people should say that Muhammad puts his own comrades to death." When, however, the hypocrites erected a mosque in Medina at the instigation of Abu 'Amir, with a view to providing a rendezvous for the conspirators against Islam, the Prophet ordered it to be burnt down under Divine injunction. The mosque was built before the expedition of Tabuk. The Prophet was invited to perform the opening ceremony by saying his prayers therein. He replied that he would see to it on his return from the Tabuk expedition. In the meanwhile

he came to know through Divine revelation that it was not a mosque, but in reality a hot-bed for hatching plots, for the ruination of Islam.[1] Hence on his return, it was set on fire. 'Abdullah expired about two months later. Among the Muslims he was known as the Chief of the hypocrites, and his deep-rooted enmity to Islam was beyond the shadow of a doubt. But seemingly, he used to repeat the Muslim formula of faith, and called himself a Muslim. His son, also named 'Abdullah, but a sincere Muslim, came to the Prophet on his father's death, and asked him on behalf of the deceased for two favours,—firstly, to grant his own shirt for a shroud, and secondly, to perform funereal Service in person. For an arch-enemy such as 'Abdullah, such a treatment!—a treatment that was reserved for friends. But the Prophet's heart was too generous to grudge a favour, to a bitter enemy. He granted both the requests, giving his shirt to enshroud the deceased. But when he made ready for the funeral prayers, 'Umar tried to dissuade him, emphasising that 'Abdullah was a great enemy of the faith. But the Prophet said he must say prayers over his body. On this 'Umar further remonstrated, inviting the Prophet's attention to the Qurânic verse which says, "If thou shouldst ask forgiveness for them even seventy times, God will not forgive them."[2] "Then I would ask forgiveness more than seventy times," rejoined the Prophet. His generosity shown to the Meccans has already been related to be illimitable, and now towards this greatest internal enemy his treatment was no less generous. What a vast breadth of sympathy! Doubtless he is the one personage in human history who

[1] 9 : 107 - 110. [2] 9 : 80.

is entitled on the score of authentic facts and figures to be acclaimed as the "Mercy for Nations."[1] His heart was overflowing with tender mercy not only for his friends but equally for the bitterest of his foes.

The fury of the hypocrites' hostility abated with the death of 'Abdullah-bin-Ubayy. The righteousness of Islam gradually dawned upon them, as all attempts at its suppression failed one by one. So far, they had exerted themselves to their utmost to injure Islam, but all to no avail. Now that their chief passed away, they began to perceive that the Divine hand was surely at the back of Islam. Many of them, convinced of the truth of the faith, became sincere and devout Muslims. A few who were still left unreclaimed were excluded from the brotherhood, in accordance with the Divine behest. It is particularly noteworthy here that these men were given no punishment whatsoever. Neither were they executed, nor were they exiled. All that was done was to openly warn the Muslims against their mischiefs. No poor-rate was demanded from them.[2] This, if any, was the only punishment inflicted upon them. This attitude of the Prophet throws a flood of light on the real significance of Jihad in Islam. Here is the Qurânic injunction concerning Jihad: "O Prophet! Do Jihad against the unbelievers and the hypocrites."[3] If we interpret it in the light of the Prophet's practical treatment of the hypocrites, we are driven to the conclusion that Jihad means anything but bloodshed for the propagation of religion.

Thus, in the very lifetime of the Prophet, the trouble caused by the hypocrites came to an end. Islam attained

[1] 21 : 10. [2] 9 : 103. [3] 9 : 73.

security from the designs of external as well as internal enemies. An open enemy can be dealt with easily, but it is beyond human power to keep a movement free from such inner enemies. Over and above this, not only was enmity obliterated from all over the Island, but these enemies themselves were converted into devoted friends. Was it something within human reach to accomplish? Nay, it was done by the hand of Him who had spoken long since, "Before long Allah will bring about friendly relations between you and those whom you regard as your enemies; and Allah is Almighty; and Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."[1]

[1] 60 : 7.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE YEAR OF DEPUTATIONS

> "When there comes the help of Allah and the victory, and thou seest men entering the religion of Allah in groups, then celebrate the praise of thy Lord and ask His forgiveness; surely He is oft returning to Mercy."
> (The Holy Qurán, CX, 1–3.)

TOWARDS the close of the ninth and throughout the tenth year A.H., deputations from the various clans and tribes kept pouring into Medina. The deputation from Taif waited upon the Prophet about the end of the 9th year. It has already been noticed that at the battle of Hawazin, when a portion of the discomfited foe took refuge in Taif, the Prophet had to lay siege to the town. When, however, he made sure that they were no longer capable of inflicting any injury on the Muslims, the siege was raised. 'Urwa, the chief of the Saqif was absent on this occasion, having gone to Yaman to qualify himself in the skill of warfare. On his return he made straight for Medina. He was already acquainted with the merits of Islam and had also seen the Prophet on the occasion of the truce of Hudaibiyya. Arriving at Medina, he accepted Islam, and his foremost concern thereafter was to see his own people benefited with the blessings of Islam. The Prophet dissuaded him from attempting the conversion of his tribe; for he had had personal experience of their bitterness. But 'Urwa was over-confident of his influence among his people. He assured the

Prophet that he commanded very high respect among them, and therefore he would be quite safe. Reaching Taif, he summoned all the people together and invited them to accept Islam. Early at dawn he sounded the call to prayer, on which certain strong-headed fellows surrounded his house, and showered arrows upon him, till he was slain. This led to a skirmish between the people of Taif and the tribe of Hawazin, who had by now joined the faith. At last when they saw Islam prevailing on all sides, and opposition seemed useless, they decided to accept the faith. A deputation consisting of six chiefs and about twenty others was formed to call at Medina. The Prophet did not even demand an explanation regarding the murder of 'Urwa. They showed their willingness to accept Islam, but requested that the idol Lat should not be destroyed for three years, for the ignorant and the women folk would not like it. The Prophet rejected the demand. At last they asked for a respite of one month. But how could Islam and idolatry go together? The Prophet sent Mughira, to pull down the idol; for they feared they would come to grief, should they do it with their own hands.

During this year, a deputation from Banu Tamim, as already stated, came to the Prophet. Before the expiry of the 9th year, Islam had spread all over the southern and eastern parts of the island of Arabia. The majority of the chiefs of Yaman, Mahra, 'Umman, Bahrain and Yamama, joined Islam, either through delegations or epistles. The Arabs were by tradition a freedom loving race. A tribe would look upon it as a disgrace to pay any subsidy to another. Hence the payment of the poor-rate stood in the way of some of the tribes.

They liked Islam, but they could not reconcile themselves to submit to the humiliation, as they regarded it, of paying a tax even though Divine. The Christians of Mahra and Yaman also joined towards the close of this year. A preacher was sent to Munzir, the chief of Bahrain who accepted Islam without the slightest hesitation. The Christian tribe, Banu Hanifa, also sent a delegation thereabout. Another was received from the tribes of Yamama. This was the one which included the notorious impostor, Musailma. He thought that mere idle talk of Divine things had made Muhammad a Prophet; why should he not try the same himself? This led to his claim to prophethood, but finally he fell in a battle during Abu Bakr's caliphate.

A deputation consisting of sixteen persons was also sent by another Christian tribe, the Banu Taghlib. But the most well-known Christian delegation was that from Najran, consisting of seventy members. Their chiefs were Abdul Masih and Abdul Haris, coming of the tribes of Banu Kinda and Banu Haris respectively. These people belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. Whereas other delegations were lodged at the houses of the various Muslims, this one was allowed to put up at the Prophet's mosque, where they were also allowed to hold their service in accordance with the ritual of their own faith. They were invited to Islam, but they were desirous of holding a discussion. When, however, they rejected the clear and valid arguments advanced, the Prophet summoned them to what is known as *Mubahala* in Islamic phraseology. A *Mubahala* consists in invoking Divine decision through prayer after argumentation has failed to settle a point of religious difference. The two parties by mutual agree-

ment address God with the prayer that whichsoever of the two be in the wrong, may be visited with some heavenly calamity to serve as a warning to others. But the Christian chiefs had already perceived the righteousness of Islam. They dared not accept the Prophet's challenge to a *Mubahala,* nor did they like to give up their own faith. At last they returned, having entered into an agreement with the Prophet.[1]

In the year 10 A.H. deputations from certain other Yamanite tribes called on the Prophet, of which that of Bajila was the most noteworthy. This tribe had a temple of its own called the Zul-Khulasa which was regarded as the Ka'ba of Yaman. The idol *Khulasa* after which the temple was so called was also demolished.

Wail and Ash'as, two chiefs of Hazramaut, came with a large following. They were clad in silk garments. The Prophet asked them if they would like to embrace Islam. They had come, they said, with that express object. Then the Prophet told them to put off their silk dress, which was forthwith done, and all were admitted to Islam. It was not merely to teach certain morals that the Prophet had been commissioned. His mission was to uproot every moral and social evil. He abolished all the long prevailing corruptions, and gave a distinct Islamic tone to the whole fabric of society. At a single stroke he raised a fallen humanity from the depth of ignominy, purified them of all their evil habits, and imbued them with the pure and simple ways of Islamic life. In fact, he infused an altogether fresh life into them.

In this manner, tribe after tribe, and clan after clan, sent their deputations to the Prophet desiring to be ad-

[1] 3 : 60.

mitted into the Islamic brotherhood. Then they would ask the Prophet to depute a teacher for their instruction in religion, as well as a collector for the realization of the poor-rate.

There were, however, still left some who had not lost hope of striking a death-blow at Islam. Two of them, 'Amir and Arbad, decided to assault the Prophet all of a sudden. 'Amir, according to the plan, was to engage the Prophet in conversation, while Arbad was to strike him dead with his sword. Accordingly, they went out with this intention, and happening to meet the Prophet, 'Amir began talking to him as pre-arranged, but Arbad could not summon enough courage to fulfil his part. At last, when 'Amir saw that no such plan could succeed, he asked the Prophet to grant him an interview in private, which to his utter disappointment was refused. 'Amir was the chief of a very mighty tribe. When departing, he threatened the Prophet that he would bring down upon him an overwhelming force of mounted and foot soldiers. The Prophet, thereon only prayed to God for protection, saying, "O Allah! suffice me against 'Amir-bin-Tufail." And strange to say, this enemy of Islam died of plague on his way back, before he could get to his people.

In short, the period of warfare was over and people joined Islam in multitudes, till in the course of some two years, there was one and but one religion—Islam—throughout the vast island of Arabia with a few Jewish and Christian exceptions here and there. The cry of *Allah-o-Akbar* resounded on all sides. A marvellous phenomenon! There was a time when the Prophet would, on pilgrimage occasion, go round the various

tribes inviting them to Islam, but nobody would listen to him. But now, the same tribes, are sending in their deputations, and regard it a great honour to be admitted into the fold of Islam. As soon as the state of warfare is over, it takes the Prophet but two brief years not only to bring the whole of Arabia under the banner of Islam, but at the same time to work a mighty transformation, sweeping away all corruptions, and uplifting the nation to the loftiest regions of spirituality.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE FAREWELL PILGRIMAGE

> "This day I have perfected for you your religion, and completed My favour on you."
>
> (The Holy Qurán, v, 3.)

THE ninth year A.H. was drawing to its close, but the island of Arabia had not altogether been purged of idolatry. There were yet certain people who clung to their ancestral form of religion. Hence the Prophet's pilgrimages so far were all of the kind known as *'Umra* or the Minor pilgrimage. By this time, however, Islam had spread far and wide and the idolatrous tribes were comparatively fewer; so a party of Muslims, with Abu Bakr at their head, was sent to Mecca, to perform the pilgrimage properly. Soon after 'Ali was sent thither to proclaim that thenceforward no polytheist would perform the pilgrimage. This was, in fact, a sort of a prophecy, foretelling the conversion of the whole of Arabia, so that no polytheist would be left to perform the pilgrimage. And the entire island, as already observed, joined Islam in the year 10 A.H., when the Prophet in person set out on a pilgrimage. And what an impressive spectacle! As many as 124000 persons from the various corners of Arabia assembled on this occasion, without having a single polytheist among them. The very spot where the Prophet was, at the beginning of his mission, discarded and rejected, was now the scene of marvellous devotion to him. To whichever side he turned his

eye, he saw hosts of devoted friends. What an inspiring manifestation of Divine power! How all those assembled there, must have been impressed with Divine awe and majesty, may well be imagined.

But whereas the Prophet observed this remarkable sight of the ultimate triumph of Truth, he was at the same time given to understand that his mission on earth had been fulfilled. His efforts had been crowned with success, such as had never fallen nor will ever fall to the lot of man. Thus the time had come when he should retire from this earthly life, the grand object of which had been accomplished;—on the one hand, the whole of Arabia had embraced Islam, while on the other, religion itself had attained its highest point of perfection. "This day," the Divine word came to tell him, "I have perfected your religion for you and completed My favour on you."[1] It was, thenceforward unnecessary that another messenger should ever arise. All the religious requirements of man had been provided for in the Holy Qurán. This would be the one fountain of Divine Knowledge at which humanity would drink for all time to come.

No doubt, no better occasion could have been chosen to proclaim the momentous and happy news of the perfection of religion. This was the place which had never, in the history of the world, witnessed any temporal struggles or bloodshed. This was the assembly which had met there for the sole object of Divine glorification, cutting asunder all worldly ties, for the time being. This was a congregation where human equality ruled supreme, where no mark of distinction between the king and the peasant was to be noticed, where all met as fellow-

[1] 5 : 3.

brethren to do homage to their Lord on high, and where every heart was filled with Divine awe.

The sermon that the Prophet delivered on this occasion was remarkable. He was mounted on a camel, and the people assembled all around him on the field of Mina. The words that fell from his lips were repeated aloud in order to reach the farthest ends of the vast assembly. Every Arabian tribe and clan was represented on this occasion, and thus the message was conveyed throughout the length and breadth of the island. It ran thus:

"O people! Lend an attentive ear to my words; for I know not whether I shall ever hereafter have the opportunity to meet you here." Obviously the Prophet had perceived the approach of his end from the verse announcing the perfection of religion, which was revealed to him on the 9th of Zul-Haj, in the field of 'Arafat. He had been raised, he was well cognizant, with a view to perfecting Divine law. Evidently, when he was informed that that perfection had been attained, he came to the conclusion that his presence on earth was no longer needed.

Then he proceeded as follows:

"Do you know what day is it to-day? This is the *Yaum-un-Nahr* or the sacred Day of Sacrifice. Do you know which month is this? This is the sacred month. Do you know what place is this? This is the sacred town. So I apprise you that your lives, your properties, and your honour must be as sacred to one another as this sacred day, as this sacred month, and as this sacred town. Let those present take this message to those absent. You are about to meet your Lord who will call you to account for your deeds.

"This day all sums of interest are remitted, including that of 'Abbas-bin-'Abd-ul-Muttalib. This day, the retaliation for all murders committed in the days of ignorance is cancelled, and foremost of all, the murder of Rabi'-bin-Haris is forgiven.

"O people! This day Satan has despaired of re-establishing his worship in this land of yours. But should you obey him even in what may seem to you trifling, it will be a matter of pleasure for him. So you must beware of him in the matter of your faith.

"Then, O my people! You have certain rights over your wives, and so have your wives over you.... They are the trust of God in your hands. So you must treat them with all kindness.... And as regards your slaves, see that you give them to eat of what you yourself eat, and clothe them with what you clothe yourselves.

"O people! Listen to what I say and take it to heart. You must know that every Muslim is the brother of another Muslim. You are all equal, i. e. enjoy equal rights and have similar obligations. You are all members of one common brotherhood. So it is forbidden for any of you to take from his brother save what the latter should willingly give. So do not tyrannize over your people, i. e. do not usurp their rights."

Then the Prophet cried at the top of his voice "O Lord! Have I conveyed Thy message," and the valley resounded with the reply from the myriads of human tongues with one accord "By Lord! Surely you have." No doubt the message was sublime, but the zeal with which it was delivered was no less so. Here is another Sermon on the Mount in the history of the world, grander than the first and more practicable,

CHAPTER XXIX

THE PROPHET'S DEMISE

> "And Muhammad is no more than an Apostle; the apostles have already passed away before him; if then he dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heels."
>
> (The Holy Qurán, III, 143.)

On his return from the farewell pilgrimage, when he received the happy tidings of the perfection of religion and delivered his final message, the Prophet was every moment looking forward to meet his Lord. About the end of the month of Safar, 11 A.H. he fell ill. He had already ordered the despatch of an army towards the Syrian border, under the command of Usama, son of Zaid, whose father had been slain in a previous expedition sent towards that part. Notwithstanding his illness, in person did he entrust Usama with the standard, and men of position such as Abu Bakr and 'Umar were placed under him as ordinary soldiers. By so doing he intended to emphasise, on the very eve of his earthly life, the principle of human equality. The army encamped outside Medina, but the Prophet's illness growing alarming, its advance was postponed. With the consent of all his wives, it was agreed upon that the Prophet should stay on at 'Aysha's house, for the period of his illness. Till his last breath 'Aisha kept to his bed-side and nursed him. Even in the course of his illness he would go out to the mosque to lead prayers as usual, but felt too weak to speak. One day much water was poured over

his head before he could come out, and he had a bandage round his head. After the prayer, he addressed the congregation, saying that Allah had offered a servant of His a choice between this earthly life and the life with Him, but he chose the latter. Abu Bakr was quick enough to realize that the Prophet was referring to his approaching end, so tears came into his eyes. Then the Prophet directed that all the doors opening into the courtyard of the mosque should be closed, except that of Abu Bakr. Then he advised the Refugees to show every kindness to the Helpers.

The following day, the Prophet grew weaker. When at Bilal's call to prayer, he bestirred himself to rise and make ablutions, he found himself incapable of doing it. So he said that Abu Bakr should be asked to lead the prayers. 'Aysha excused her father, by saying that he was a man of tender heart, and he would burst into tears in reciting the Qurán. Besides his voice was too low. But the Prophet repeated the same direction. Again 'Aysha put forward the same excuse on behalf of her father, but the Prophet was persistent, so Abu Bakr, thereafter, led the prayers. One day when he felt a little relief, he moved the curtain of his house aside and stepped into the mosque. The congregational prayer was at that moment going on, beholding which a ripple of joy passed over his face. He saw with his own eyes how devoutly and humbly those whose guidance was entrusted to him, bowed and prostrated before Allah, even in his absence. This was, indeed, a matter of no small happiness to him. But his strength failed him, and he had to retrace his steps. This happened on Monday, and this gave the assembly an impression that he was convalescent. So they all

resumed their various pursuits, Abu Bakr departing to visit his family at Sunnah. But the Prophet collapsed, and 'Aysha supported him. In the meantime one of her relations entered the room with a green twig in his hand. The Prophet asked for it with a gesture and rubbed his teeth therewith, cleaning his mouth well. Then there came a sudden change over him. His strength failed rapidly. "Lord! blessed Companionship on High," were the last words of his earnest prayer in whisper. Having faithfully rendered his obligations towards his earthly companions, he now returned to the loving bosom of Companionship on High. It was on Monday the second of Rabi'-ul-Awwal, when he breathed his last, at the age of sixty-three. May the Lord shower his choicest blessings on him!

The news of the Prophet's death spread like wild-fire, and people thronged into the mosque. 'Umar thought the rumour had been given out by some malicious mischief-mongers. Was not the Prophet with them in the mosque but a little while ago? Did he not look convalescent? Under this impression, 'Umar addressed the assembly and insisted that the Prophet was not dead. Whosoever, he continued, with his sword drawn, should say that the Prophet was dead, would do so at the cost of his own head. All were attending to 'Umar when Abu Bakr appeared on the scene and made straightway for 'Aysha's house. Uncovering the Prophet's face, he found that the unhappy news was too true. Then kissing the forehead of his departed friend, he exclaimed, "God will not bring death twice upon thee." Then he went out into the mosque and mounting the pulpit, he began to address the assembly. "O people!" he said, "Verily, whosoever

worshipped Muhammad, behold! Muhammad is indeed dead. But whosoever worshipped Allah, behold! Allah is Alive, and will never die."

It required no small moral courage to utter these words in the atmosphere of excitement then prevailing. 'Umar was standing there with his sword unsheathed to strike off the head of anybody who should dare say so. But the Muslims, brought up under the influence of the Great Prophet, were devoted heart and soul to the worship of One God. Had it not been for the fact that they were too jealously devoted to the unalloyed unity of God, they must have greatly resented the blunt words of Abu Bakr. Then Abu Bakr proceeded to recite the Qurânic verse quoted above: "Muhammad is no more than an Apostle; all apostles have already passed away before him; if then he dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heels?"[1] The Prophet's mission, the communication of Divine will to mankind, had been fulfilled. His death could therefore mean no defect in religion. There was no reason to feel so much grieved. Had not the prophets before him passed away one and all? Muhammad too was mortal and must share the common lot of mankind. Prophets could claim no exception to the law of nature which was applicable to all alike. Had a single one of the foregoing prophets escaped death, there would have been cause for the Muslims to grieve. But all his predecessors had passed away and there was nothing extraordinary in Muhammad's death. The sermon had a very soothing effect upon the assembly, and this Qurânic verse was on the lips of everyone. It brought solace to the wounded hearts of the Muslims in this unbearably sad bereave-

[1] 3 : 143.

ment. They submitted with a cheerful resignation to the will of Allah. Prophet or non-prophet, everybody must depart from this earthly abode, sooner or later; Allah alone and none but Allah is Everlasting. The Prophet's retirement, however, after the thorough accomplishment of his mission, is an incident unique in the history of the world.

CHAPTER XXX

THE PROPHET'S WIVES

> "O, Prophet! Say to your wives, If you desire this world's life and its ornature, then come, I will give you a provision and allow you to depart a goodly departure."
>
> (The Holy Qurán, XXXIII, 28.)

THE Prophet's first marriage came about at the age of twenty-five. Khadija, his first wife, was then a widow of forty. Excepting his son Ibrahim, all the Prophet's children were begotten by Khadija. She passed away three years before the Emigration. At the time of her death, the Prophet was fifty years old. Thus, the two lived together for full twenty-five years. Though it was a common practice in Arabia to have a number of wives, yet to the good old age of fifty, the Prophet had only Khadija for his wife.

From the very beginning, Khadija had been a great support to the Prophet. Her death therefore caused him a severe shock. He would ever after recollect and talk of the happy associations with her. He would, out of regard for her memory, send presents to her lady friends after her death. Sometime afterwards, Abu Bakr, gave his daughter, 'Aysha, in marriage to him. Being young at the time, 'Aysha remained at her father's house till seven or eight months after the Emigration, when she also reached Medina, and joined the Prophet's household. Of all the Prophet's wives she alone was a virgin.

After his engagement to 'Aysha, the Prophet married Sauda, a widow of advanced age, at Mecca. She had emigrated, along with her husband, to Abyssinia. On their return, her husband died on the way, leaving her in a terrible state of trouble. Small as the Muslim brother hood then was, where could she look for a respectable shelter? So she offered her hand to the Prophet, who accepted it.

Hafsa, the daughter of 'Umar, was left a widow at the battle of Badr, her husband, Khunais, having been slain in action. 'Umar approached Abu Bakr and then 'Usman to take his daughter in marriage. This shows the dearth of marriageable men among the Muslims at the time. Both of them excused themselves, perhaps for the reason that Hafsa was a bit harsh of temperament. At last the Prophet took her in marriage in the year 3 A.H. The same year, Abdullah-bin-Jahsh having fallen on the field of Uhud, his widow Zainab was also taken in marriage by the Holy Prophet. A year later, on the death of Abu Salma, to his widow Umm-i-Salma was also extended the shelter of the Prophet's household.

Zainab was the daughter of the Prophet's aunt Umaima, daughter of Abdul Muttalib. The Prophet proposed to her brother that she should be given in marriage to Zaid, his own liberated slave. Both the brother and the sister were much averse to this, for Zaid was only a freedman and as such could not, according to the pre-Islamic notions of respectability, enter into a matrimonial alliance with a woman of high birth such as Zainab was. They wished the Prophet himself to marry her. They yielded, however, under pressure from the Prophet, who was anxious to abolish the false

distinctions of birth and class. The union, however, was not a happy one. Differences arose and relations were strained to the breaking point. When all attempts at reconciliation had failed, there was only one alternative left—divorce. Thus as a last resort they were separated. She was thereafter taken into marriage by the Prophet himself, that being the wish of the lady and her relations; and now that the marriage arranged by him had proved unsuccessful, he was morally bound to meet their desire. This marriage came about in the year 5 A.H.

The same year, at the battle of Banu Mustaliq, a large number of prisoners, male as well as female, fell into the Muslims' hands. Among them was one Juwairiya, the daughter of an Arab Chief, Haris. Coming to the Prophet to ransom his daughter, he embraced Islam along with his two sons. Juwairiya's husband had already died, so Haris offered her hand to the Prophet, who accepted it. As a consequence of this marriage, the prisoners of Banu Mustaliq, about a hundred families, were all released by the Muslims. The tribe which was so honoured by the Prophet's relationship, they said, should not remain in prison.

Among the emigrants to Abyssinia, was also the daughter of Abu Sufyan, Umm-i-Habiba. Her husband, 'Ubaidullah, turned Christian there. On his death, while Umm-i-Habiba was yet in Abyssinia, the Prophet married her. She came to Medina in 7 A.H.

At the battle of Khaibar in 7 A. H., Safiyya, the daughter of a Jewish chief, was one of the prisoners taken. Her husband had already fallen in action. The Jews had been a ceaseless source of trouble to the Muslims. The Prophet thought a matrimonial alliance with them

might once and for all put a stop to their mischiefs. Thus came Safiyya among the Prophet's wives. In this very year Mary the Coptic, who was sent as a present to the Prophet by Mukoukas, also joined the Prophet's household. She gave birth to a son, named Ibrahim. The same year another widow, Maimuna, offered her hand to the Prophet, and it was accepted. Khadija and Zainab passed away in the Prophet's lifetime. At his demise, nine wives survived him.

These facts lead us to three important conclusions. Firstly, all the Prophet's wives, with the only exception of 'Aysha, were widows or divorced women. Secondly, the Prophet had but one wife till the age of fifty-three. Thirdly, five of his wives were helpless Muslims' widows, to whom he was bound in honour to extend his shelter, while three came from enemy tribes, and were instrumental in effecting conciliation.

Plurality of wives is met with in the lives of great religious personages. Abraham, who enjoys the reverence of more than half the human race, had more wives than one. Similar was the case with Jacob, Moses, and David. Solomon is reported to have carried the number to hundreds. These were the ancestors of Jesus. As to Jesus himself, he had not even one, as the Gospels show. So his example in the matter is out of the question. Should celibacy be made the ideal of life and become the rule, the world would come to an end before long. Thus it is obvious that the institution of polygamy has no intrinsic evil, and the mere fact that the Prophet had a number of wives is by no means objectionable; it was the custom of the patriarchs of old.

Up to a good old age of fifty-three, when one out-

grows the passions of youth, the Prophet led his life in the company of but one wife, thereby setting an example that monogamy must be the rule of life under normal conditions. And as a matter of fact, this is exactly the purport of the Qurânic teachings. But as a universal religion, Islam must needs provide for all sorts of abnormalities. Polygamy is one such provision, permissible only when certain abnormal conditions call for it. When such conditions do arise, polygamy becomes a necessity, and if it is not allowed then, the result is immoral sexual intercourse. The society becomes corrupt. Unmarried mothers, and natural children become a part of it. Polygamy is, under such circumstances, the only effective preventive. Call it a necessary evil, or what you will, it is the only safeguard against moral turpitude. The Prophet was to be a perfect exemplar for mankind. Hence it was necessary that, notwithstanding his spending the whole of his youth, nay, even the major portion of his old age, with a single wife, he should have taken more wives than one, when war had increased the female element. We observe, that his disposition was averse to warfare. Full forty years before the Call he had been living in a land, where sword was as freely wielded as a stick, which was a vast den of wild animals flying at one another's throat, where fighting and feuds were the order of the day, where there was no chance of survival for one, who could not use the sword; yet not once he did deal a blow at an enemy. Even after the Call when fighting had to be resorted to as a measure of self-defence, and the Prophet did in person take part in several battles, his sword never fell upon an enemy, excepting once at the

battle of Uhud when he had to use it against one of the enemies who rushed down upon him, charging him most furiously. Again, he was so peace-loving by nature, that he preferred the truce of Hudaibiyya to bloodshed, though it treated the Muslims as a defeated party. Notwithstanding the fact that warfare was so alien to his nature, he was driven by sheer force of circumstance to take the field. For war is another necessary evil, and there comes a time when it cannot be avoided. The Holy Prophet could not be called a perfect exemplar, had he omitted to set an example on the field of battle as well, for the guidance of mankind. Circumstances arose which dragged him into the field to demonstrate how an ordinary soldier and a general, should conduct himself. We observe also that in a hot country like Arabia he leads a spotlessly chaste life as a celibate till the age of twenty-five. His purity of character is of household fame. Then, he lives with one wife—and she too a widow, fifteen years his senior,—till he is fifty. All these facts force upon us the conclusion that his continence was an impenetrable proof against lust and passion. Still at that old age, when sanity cannot possibly impeach him of sensuality, unless blinded by prejudice, he had to take more wives, so that this unavoidable aspect of human life might not be left undemonstrated in the life of the Perfect Exemplar.

What throws further light on the fact that all sorts of sordid cravings and passions, so characteristic of human nature, had seen thoroughly extinguished in the case of the Prophet, is the exceeding simplicity of his mode of life. Notwithstanding his living in this world, he had little attachment to the charms it can present. From the

cradle to the grave, he passes through a diversity of circumstances—a diversity which can hardly be met with in the life of a single man. Orphanhood is the extreme of helplessness, while kingship, that of power. From an orphan, he climbs to the summit of royal glory, but that creates not the slightest change in his way of living. He lives on exactly the same kind of humble fare, wears the same simple dress, and in all particulars has the same mode of life as he had in the state of orphanhood. It is hard to give up a kingly throne and lead the life of a hermit, but it is far harder that one should wield the royal sceptre, yet at the same time lead a hermit's life, that one should possess power and pelf, yet spend it solely to promote the welfare of others, that one should ever have the most alluring attractions before one's eyes, yet never for one moment be captivated by them. When the Prophet had attained to absolute power over Medina and its suburbs, the furniture of his house was composed of an ordinary bed with a matting of palm-leaves and an earthen jug for water. Some nights he would go without food. For days, no fire would be lit in his house to prepare food, the whole family living on mere dates. There was no lack of means to live a life of ease and comfort. The public treasury was at his disposal. The well-to-do among his followers, who did not shrink from sacrificing their lives for his sake, would have been only too glad to provide him with every comfort of life, should he choose to avail himself of it. But worldly things carried little weight in his estimation. No mundane craving could ever prevail over him, neither in times of indigence, nor of plenty. Just as he spurned at worldly things, such as power, pelf

and beauty, which the Quraish offered him when he was yet in a state of uttermost helplessness, so did he remain indifferent to them even now that God granted him all these things out of His own grace.

But a still more conclusive argument on the point is furnished by an incident alluded to in the Quránic verse quoted above. Shortly after their immigration into Medina, the condition of the Muslims improved. Business brought them prosperity. Besides, the booty that fell into their hands, together with the ransom money for the prisoners taken at the battle of Badr, made them comparatively ease-loving. So there was some change in the mode of their lives. But the household of the Prophet was absolutely unaffected by this change of fortune. Quite a human desire, however, crept into the hearts of the Prophet's wives, that like other Muslim families, they too should avail themselves of their share of comforts. Accordingly they approached the Prophet in a body to prevail upon him to allow them their legitimate share of worldly felicity. Thereupon came the Divine injunction directing the Prophet to tell his wives that they could not remain his wives, if they would cherish such sordid cravings. So they must choose between the two alternatives. They must either have worldly finery, or keep in the Prophet's household. Should they decide to have the former, they would have plenty of what they want, but would forthwith forfeit the honour of being the Prophet's wives. Can this be the reply of a sensual man. The foremost concern of such a fellow is to seek to satisfy the slightest whim of the objects of his affection? No doubt the Prophet cherished great love and regard for his wives. "The best of you," he is reported to have said,

"is the one who treats his wife best." This illustrates his attitude towards womanhood. Notwithstanding this, however, when his wives come to him with what is quite a legitimate demand, they are coldly told that the Prophet's household and worldly comforts cannot go hand in hand. They must make a choice between the two. Does any one who is a slave of his passions, disregard the wishes of his wives in such a manner? This shows beyond the shadow of a doubt how freet he Prophet's heart was of all base and sensual thoughts. He is prepared to lose all his wives rather than yield to what he regards as unworthy of his wives—an inclination towards worldly things. Does it not conclusively show that the object of his marriages was anything but self-indulgence?

It may be questioned what that object could possibly be? The Holy Qurán answers it thus: "O Prophet! say to your wives: If you desire this world's life and its ornature, then come, I will give you a provision, and allow you to depart a goodly departing. And if you (the Prophet's wives) desire Allah and his Apostle and the latter abode, then surely Allah has prepared for the doers of good among you a mighty reward. And keep in mind what is recited in your houses of the communications of Allah and of the wisdom."[1] Thus, it has been clearly set forth here that the Prophet's household was not the place for ministering to carnal cravings. The object was far more sublime—the preservation of what they heard and learnt through their frequent association with the Prophet for the benefit of mankind in general, and their own sex in particular. Hence they were required to spurn at all the charms of this life, and attend heart

[1] 33 : 28-29, 34

and soul to the fulfilment of the real object. What a lofty object! There are a hundred and one morals of a man that do not find manifestation but in relation to the fair sex. Again there are certain points of Islamic law which appertain to the female sex exclusively, and cannot find promulgation but through members of the same sex. In order that the world might not be deprived of those sayings and doings that could only find expression in the household, and in order that these things might be handed down to posterity, it was assigned to the Prophet's wives to watch all they heard or saw, and communicate the same to others. Thus the Prophet's marriages were intended as a means towards the realization of a religious object of great importance. There is many a point in Islamic code which the Prophet could not explain to women direct. He could do it through his wives. Traditions record many instances of women asking information on particular matters pertaining to their sex, and the Prophet refering them to some one of his wives who would give them the necessary information. Again, quite a lot of the Prophet's moral conceptions which could be brought into play only within the family circle have come down to us through his wives. To say that a single woman could do that is to overestimate the capacity of human memory. Persons of varied temperaments, and hence of different interests, were needed to duly comprehend and preserve the numerous things that came to their notice. Surely all that would have been far too much for a single human brain to hold. This is also one of the reasons why almost all the great prophets took more wives than one. This was all the more important in the case of the Last Prophett, in order hat his words

and deeds should be preserved and handed down in their details; for these were to serve as guidance to mankind for all ages to come. Thus it was a part of Divine wisdom to have so arranged to ensure the preservation of the Prophet's teachings, in precept as well as in practice.

Though the object of the Prophet's plurality of marriages was what has been stated above, but the causes were manifold. The circle of Muslim brotherhood was, at the time, very narrow. The perpetual state of war created disparity between the male and female elements of the society. Husbands having fallen on the field of battle, their widows had to be provided for. But bread and butter is not the only provision needed in such cases, as is supposed by certain short-sighted statesmen. Their sex-requirements must be looked after, otherwise moral corruption would inevitably result, and ultimately lead to the ruin of a whole nation. But a reformer, with whom morals are all in all, could not content himself with making provisions merely for their eating and drinking. The Prophet was jealous of their chastity, far more than of their physical needs. It became, therefore, necessary to sanction polygamy under the circumstances. This is the reason that the Prophet had to take a number of wives in the Medinite period of his life. We must note that all of his wifes were either widows or divorced women. Where self-indulgence is the motive, the choice seldom falls on widows. Passion must needs have virginity for its gratification. And there was no dearth of virgins. It would have been an enviable privilege for any Muslim to be the father-in-law of the Prophet. But the object was far nobler one—the protection of the widows of

his friends. Thus as many as five of his wives were such as had lost their husbands on the battle field or otherwise. How difficult it was in those times to arrange a match for a Muslim woman is amply illustrated by the case of Hafsa, the widowed daughter of a man of 'Umar's influence and position, as already mentioned. So in polygamy alone lay the moral safety of the Muslim society situated as it then was.

Again, certain political reasons also led to some of the Prophet's marriages. That with Juwairiya, for instance, resulted in a great blessing. It did not only put an end to the bitter hostility of the Banu Mustaliq, but bound them in a strong tie of friendship to the Muslims. Moreover, as an immediate consequence of this, hundreds of prisoners of that tribe were instantaneously set at large. Was it anything but a religious end? Likewise the Jews were the deadliest enemies of Islam in Arabia. The Prophet attempted to conciliate them as well, by taking a wife from among their nobility. In this case, however, the Jewish malice proved too strong for the conciliatory measures adopted by the Prophet. They persisted in their hostility and never ceased concocting mischief against Islam. On his own part, however, the Prophet did his utmost to conciliate them. Maimuna was also a widow and came of an alien tribe, though the circumstances that led to her marriage with the Prophet were somewhat different. Her sister was already married to 'Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, and so when she offered her hand to the Prophet, the latter could not refuse it.

Whereas the Prophet's object in taking so many widows in marriage was simply to extend to them the

shelter of his own roof, his motive in the case of Zainab was quite a different one. Thereby he meant to wipe off the stigma of ignominy that a divorced woman carries in popular estimation. There is no doubt about the fact that divorce is the outcome of dislike which naturally brings the woman into a certain amount of odium. She is looked down upon and she often forfeits the chance of re-marriage, especially among the kith and kin of the former husband. Now, the relation in which Zaid stood to the Prophet was one of deep attachment on either side, so much so that he was known as the son of Muhammad. The Prophet himself arranged for his marriage with Zainab, a lady of high birth from among his own relations. But the couple could not pull together. Zaid made up his mind to divorce her, but the Prophet dissuaded him, as plainly stated in the Holy Qurán.[1] But ultimately a divorce was found necessary. The Prophet took her into his own household, in order to remove the false notion that divorce degraded woman. Thus he elevated the whole class of divorced women, who would otherwise suffer lifelong humiliation in society. It is absolutely false to allege that the Prophet took a fancy to Zainab and hence Zaid was made to divorce her. It is absurd on the very face of it. Is it conceivable that Zaid should thereafter have remained as devoted to him as ever? Nay, he could not conscientiously remain even a Muslim. But the fact is that his attachment for, and faith in the Prophet, was not in the least shaken. He enjoyed as usual the thorough confidence of the Prophet, to the extent that he was entrusted with the command of his troops. Again, Zainab was well-known

[1] 33 : 36-37.

to the Prophet from her very childhood, being the daughter of his aunt. Her brother wished that the Prophet should himself take her into marriage, yet he wedded her to Zaid. If he had any passion for her as alleged, what prevented him from marrying her in her virginity. He married her after she had been divorced and, as such, lowered in general estimation. Refusal of her hand in the first case and acceptance in the second, conclusively shows that his motive in this marriage was anything but self-gratification. It was, indeed, the elevation of the divorced woman in the eye of society. This was, in fact, another step towards the amelioration of the status of the fair sex.

Why, it might be asked, was Mary the Coptic, who was neither a widow, nor a divorced woman, taken into marriage? This was due to quite a different reason. The Prophet had wives from among the Quraish as well as from the non-Quraish Arabian tribes. Though an Israelite, Safiyya was also an Arab lady. But the Prophet whose mission was to mankind at large, had to exemplify that he had the same respect and regard for other nationalities as for his own. Therefore when Mary was sent to him by the Mukoukas of Egypt, he admitted her, though she was a foreigner, to his household on terms of perfect equality with his Arab wives.

Thus, in all the Prophet's marriages, there was some ulterior moral end in view. There arose situations in his life, under which he could not, consistently with the moral and religious mission of his life, help taking more wives than one. In that, lay the welfare of mankind, and he resorted to it. The prime of his life, nay, even a good part of his old age, he spent in the company of

but one wife, thereby demonstrating that monogamy was the rule under normal conditions. When, however, the chastity and purity of women was at stake, and the question of their status was involved, he did not shrink from introducing what was the only alternative—Polygamy. But this, it must be borne in mind, is an exception to meet abnormal situations, and not the rule.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE PROPHET'S MORALS AND MANNERS

> "Certainly you have in the Apostle of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the latter day and remembers Allah much."
> (The Holy Qurán, XXXIII, 21.)

"His morals are the Qurán;" are the words in which 'Aysha, the Prophet's wife, the most privy to his secrets, has summed up the whole range of his morals and manners. In other words, his daily life was a true picture of the Quránic teachings. He was an embodiment, so to speak, of all that is enjoined in the Holy Qurán. Just as the Book of God is a code of high morals for the development of the manifold faculties of man, similarly the Prophet's life is a practical repository of all those morals. Thus a Muslim has a twofold guidance—the Holy Qurán in the way of precept, and the Prophet's life as a perfect example.

Simplicity and sincerity were the key-notes of the Prophet's character. He loved virtue for its own sake. High morals which formed an attractive feature of his character, were not an acquisition with him, but were ingrained in his very nature. He would do all sorts of things with his own hands. If he wanted to give alms to a beggar, with his own hands would he place it directly in those of the latter. He would assist his wives in their household duties. He would milk his own goats, patch his own clothes, and mend his own shoes. In person would

he dust the house, and he would tie his camel and look after it personally. No work was too low for him. He worked like a labourer in the construction of the mosque. Again, when a ditch was being dug to fortify Medina against the impending enemy incursion, he was seen at work among his rank and file. In person would he do shopping, not only for his household, but also for his neighbours and friends. In brief, he never despised any work, however humble, notwithstanding the dignity of his position as Prophet and King. He thus demonstrated through personal example that a man's calling, whether high or low, does not constitute the criterion of his status. It is his righteousness and treatment of others that determine whether he is noble or mean. A road-side labourer, a hewer of wood and a drawer of water is as respectable a member of Islamic Brotherhood as a big merchant or a high dignitary.

All his actions and movements were characterised by homely simplicity. Anything smacking of artificiality was repugnant to his nature. When mounted, he would not mind seating another behind him. A report from Qais says that once the Prophet paid a visit to his father Sa'd. For his return journey, Sa'd offered him his own ass to mount, and directed his son, Qais, to accompany him on foot. The Prophet, however, insisted that Qais should share the animal's back with him, and should have the front seat, for the owner had a prior claim. He did not like his companions to rise on his arrival. Once he forbade them saying "Do not rise for me as do the people of 'Ajam (non-Arabs)" and added that he was a humble creature of God, eating as others ate, and sitting as others sat. Again, when a certain man

wanted to kiss his hand, he withdrew it remarking that that was the behaviour of the non-Arabs towards their kings. Even if a slave sent him an invitation, he would accept it. He would take his meals in the company of all classes of people, even of slaves. When in a congregation, he would sometimes keep quiet for a long while. If there was really anything to talk about, he would talk; but he did not like chatting for its own sake. He gave himself no preference over others. When walking, people would walk in front of him as well as behind him. When seated among people, there was nothing about him to make him conspicuous. A stranger could not distinguish him from the rest, and had to enquire which of them was the Prophet. Such was the humility of his disposition. When squatted on the floor, he was very particular to see that his knee did not project beyond others. He would never interrupt others talking. He would, in all simplicity, join others in laughing when there was an occasion for it. He would talk so slowly that his words could even be counted. He walked so fast that his companions had sometimes to run to keep pace with him.

His habit of living was also marked by simplicity. Whatever was offered to him, he would cheerfully partake of it. If, however, there was something wrong with it, he would not eat it, but would not find fault with it. Of dates, barley, wheat, meat, and milk, whatever he could conveniently get, he would eat. If some sumptuous food was placed before him, he would partake of it, but as a rule, he would take only one course at a meal. He loved cleanliness. He had a special liking for honey. Of vegetables, he cared

for vegetable marrow. He disliked things that give a bad smell such as onions. While seated at meals he would not recline. If, when invited to dinner, some extra men accompanied him, he would not embarrass the host, but would politely drop a hint both for the host and the unconscious intruders, who would readily see it. He would wash his hands before as well as after meals and would clean his mouth.

His dress was also simple. He did not mind putting on a patched garment, nor would he discard a handsome one. He did not like the males to wear silk, for he wanted them to look manly. He was very particular about the neatness of his dress. He ordered a seal-ring only when it was needed for sealing his epistles to the various kings. Thereafter he would always wear it.

In all his habits, cleanliness was so exquisitely blended with simplicity. His dwelling consisted of small rooms, made of mud bricks, having a bedstead and a jar of water for its furniture. This is how he lived even when he had conquered Khaibar. Even on the occasion of his marriage with Safiyya, he had not the means to entertain his friends to a feast. They were asked to bring their own meals, and the wedding feast thus served consisted of ground barley and dates. For days together, no fire was lit in his house. The whole family would have only dates and water for their meals. He looked upon this world only as a temporary abode. "My case," he once observed, "is like that of a mounted wayfarer who pauses at noon under the shade of a tree, just to rest for a while, and then proceed on his way." Worldly things, riches and comforts, had no attraction for him. He would make frequent use of a green twig crushed

into a tooth-brush, cleaning his teeth a number of times daily. He would keep his body very clean, would often wash and comb his beard and hair, and always keep them tidy. He would also make use of perfume.

The Prophet had a deep love for his friends. While shaking hands with them, he would never be the first to withdraw his hand. He met everybody with a smiling face. A report from Jarir-bin-'Abdullah says that he never saw the Prophet but with a smile on his face. Sometimes he would enjoy witticism and innocent jokes with his friends. He would talk freely, never putting on artificial reserve to give himself an air of superiority. Nor would he ever talk big of himself. He would take up his friends' children in his arms and nurse them. Sometimes they made him dirty, but not a ripple of displeasure would pass over his face. He disliked backbiting and forbade his visitors to talk ill of any of his friends; for, he said, he would rather think well of them all. He would ever take the lead in greeting (assalamo alaikum! i. e. peace be with you!) his friends and shaking hands with them. He would sometimes call them by their pet names by way of affection. If someone once befriended him, ever thereafter he valued his friendship. Abu Bakr was his bosom friend to the last. He would remember with tender affection the fidelity of Khadija ever after her death. Zaid, his liberated slave, was so much attached to him that he preferred to stay on in his company rather than go with his father to his native town. He would overlook the shortcomings of others and would not even hint at them. In a general sermon, however, he would touch upon how to remove a particular drawback, without letting any-

body feel that he was referring to him. He abhorred falsehood and he loathed a liar. Of mere offence, however great, he would take no notice. At the battle of Uhud, when the archers abandoned the position at which he had posted them, with the consequent loss of those near and dear to him and injury to his own person, he did neither court-martial, nor punish them. Nay, he did not even rebuke them. To those who fled from the field, he said no more than that they had gone a bit too far.

The Prophet's generosity even towards his enemies stands unique in the annals of the world. 'Abdullah-bin-Ubayy was a sworn enemy of Islam; his days and nights were spent in plotting mischief against the faith, ever instigating the Meccans and the Jews to crush the Muslims. Yet at his death the Prophet prayed to the Lord to forgive him; nay, he even granted his own shirt to enshroud his body. The Meccans who had all along subjected him and his friends to the most barbarous tortures were awarded general amnesty. What treatment a wordly conqueror would have meted out to them can easily be imagined. But the Prophet's forgiveness was unbounded. Thirteen long years of persecutions and conspiracies were absolutely forgiven and forgotten. Prisoners of war, sometimes numbering as many as 6000, were generously set at large. A report from 'Aysha says that he never avenged any wrong to his own person. There were cases, no doubt, though very few and far between, in which punishment had to be inflicted. But all these were cases of ugly treachery by a people with whom forgiveness had lost its reformatory efficacy. To let such offenders go

scot-free would have meant countenancing mischief. Punishment was never given where there was the least chance for the success of forgiveness as a deterrent, if not as a reformatory measure. Generosity was extended to the followers of all persuasions—Jews, Christians, idolaters, all alike. He did not confine his charity to his own fold.

In the administration of justice, the Prophet was scrupulously even-handed. Muslim and non-Muslim, friend and foe, were all alike in his eyes. Even before he received the Call, his impartiality, his honesty and integrity were of household fame, and people would bring their disputes to him to settle. At Medina, the idolaters and the Jews both accepted him as the arbitrator in all their disputes. Notwithstanding the deep-rooted malice of the Jews against Islam, when a case between a Jew and a Muslim once came up before the Prophet for hearing, he decreed in favour of the former, regardless of the fact that the Muslim, nay, even perhaps the whole of his tribe, might thereby be alienated. And what such a loss meant to Islam in those days of its weaknes and hardship is obvious enough. In short, he was the embodiment of the Qurânic verse which says: "Let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably; act equitably, that is nearer to piety."[1] He warned his own daughter, Fatima, that only her own deeds alone would avail her on the day of judgment. Again he said: "Should Fatima, daughter of Muhammad, commit theft, I would certainly cut off her hands." On his death-bed, immediately before he breathed his last, he had it publicly announced, "If I owe anything to anybody it may be claimed.

[1] 5:8.

If I have offended anybody he may have his revenge."

In his dealings with others, he never placed himself on a higher pedestal. He would behave himself just as a man like others. Once, while he held the position of king at Medina, it so happened that a Jew whom he owed some money, came up to him and addressed him very harshly and rudely, in demanding his dues. "You, Banu Hasham," he tauntingly observed, "never pay back when you once get something out of another person." 'Umar was much enraged at the insolence of the Jew, but the Prophet rebuked him saying, "O 'Umar! It would have been meet for you to have advised both of us—me, the debtor, to repay the debt with gratitude, and him, the creditor, to demand it in a more becoming manner." Then he paid the Jew more than his due, and the latter was so much impressed with the Prophet's sense of justice and fairplay that he accepted Islam. On another occasion, when he was out in the wood with his friends, the time for preparation of food came. Everybody was allotted a piece of work, he himself going out to pick up some fuel. A spiritual and temporal overlord as he was, he would yet do his share of work like an ordinary man. In his treatment of his servants, he observed the same principle of equality. A report from Anas says that during the ten years that he was in the Prophet's service, he was not once scolded by him. He would never rebuke his servant for their mistakes. He never kept anybody in slavery. As soon as he got a slave, he set him free. Throughout the whole of his life, never did he beat a servant or a woman.

It is recorded that the Prophet never disappointed a

beggar. He would not give him a flat refusal. He would wait in the hope that perhaps something might yet come to his hand wherewith to satisfy his need. He would meet such demands even at the sacrifice of his own comfort. He would feed the hungry, himself going without food. He never kept any money in his possession. While on his death-bed, he sent for whatever there was in his house and distributed it among the poor. Even for the dumb creatures of God, his heart overflowed with mercy. He spoke of a man who drew water from a well to quench the thirst of a dog as having earned paradise with this act of kindness to a helpless creature of God. Once he remarked concerning a certain deceased woman that she was undergoing punishment for the offence that, while alive, she would fasten her cat and keep it hungry. From his earliest days, he had a deep sympathy for the widows, the orphans and the helpless. "I and one who looks after an orphan," he would often say, "are as close to each other as these fingers," holding up his index finger and middle finger together. The Holy Qurán is also full of similar solicitude for the orphans, the weak and the helpless. "Hast thou considered him," it says, "who belies religion? That is the one who treats the orphan with harshness and does not urge others to feed the poor."[1] He himself would calmly bear the greatest calamity, but the slightest pain to another would melt his heart. He would ever stand by the oppressed. He vindicated the rights of women over men, of slaves over their masters, of the ruled over the rulers, and of the subject over the king. He was very fond of children. While walking along, he would pat and stroke those he

[1] 107 : 1—3.

met on the way. Without fail would he visit the sick to enquire after their health and console them. He would also accompany a funeral.

Hospitality had reached its highest pitch with the Prophet. He would take pains to entertain his guests as best as he could. In person would he wait upon them. When the number of guests was too great for him to accommodate, he would distribute the excess among his companions, who, like their Master, would show them every attention. Sometimes, they would serve all the food to the guests, themselves going to bed without any.

Never in his life, did abusive language escape the Prophet's lips. Nay, he did not utter even a harsh word. He would prevent others also from harsh language. If he wanted to warn others, he would do so in a very mild and affectionate tone. The Jews would accost him with the words, *Assam-o-'Alaikum*, i. e. death on you, instead of *Assalam-o-'Alaikum*, i. e. peace on you. Hearing this 'Aysha could not restrain herself and burst out involuntarily, "May God bring death on *you*." The Prophet disapproved of this, saying God did not like harsh words.

His integrity, his righteousness and his sincerity were of universal fame throughout Arabia, so much so that he was known as *al-Amin*, the Trustworthy. His arch-enemy, Abu Jahl, had to confess that he did not call him a liar, but that he looked upon the message he brought as false. Another, Nazr-bin-Hars, bore testimony to his righteousness in the presence of his own comrades: "Muhammad was a boy amongst you, the most truthful and the most honest. Now that he has grown old and brought you a message, you call him an enchanter. By

God! He is not an enchanter." When once he pledged his word, he kept it under the most trying conditions and even at a heavy cost. According to a term in the agreement at Hudaibiyya, he bound himself to make over to the Quraish any of the Meccan Muslims who should come to seek shelter at Medina. He observed the agreement faithfully under circumstances which brought blood to the very eyes of the Muslims, as already related. In respect of chastity and piety, he was a perfect model. He led a highly pure life as a bachelor till the age of twenty-five, and even the worst of his detractors cannot point to the faintest blot on the clean sheet of his character.

Forgiveness was another most radiant gem in the Prophet's character. It found its perfect manifestation in him. The Holy Qurán enjoined him to "hold fast to forgiveness,"[1] and this was explained to him from on High thus: "Whosoever should cut you off, draw him to yourself. Whosoever should deprive you, give him. Whosoever should do you wrong, pardon him." It did not remain with the Prophet a dead letter or a cheap homily. He lived up to it under the most trying situations. At the battle of Uhud, when he was wounded and fell down, a comrade asked him to invoke Divine wrath on the enemy. "I have not been sent as a curse to mankind, but as an inviter to good and as a mercy. O Lord! Grant guidance to my people; for surely they know not." Once a Bedouin pulled him, throwing his wrapper round his neck, and when asked why he should not be repaid in the same coin, he pleaded that he (the Prophet) never returned evil for evil. The forgiveness

[1] 1 : 199.

shown at the conquest of Mecca is indeed unparalleled in the history of the world. Every imaginable attempt had been made to uproot Islam, and to take the Prophet's life. But not a word of reproach was said about these deadly crimes. To enemies like Abu Sufyan, who had been doing everything he could against Islam, and to his wife Hinda who was guilty of the heinous barbarity of mutilating Hamza's corpse, was extended unstinted forgiveness.

The Prophet was exceedingly modest. The companions used to say he was more modest than a virgin. The Holy Qurán also bears testimony to the same. He was sometimes greatly hurt through ignorance on the part of others, but he would not utter a word of disapproval, concerning which the Holy Qurán says: "Surely, such a thing hurts the Prophet, but he is too modest to tell you so."[1] He would never point out others' delinquencies by name. He would express his dislike in a general way. Once he saw some blot on a man's dress and told others to ask him to wash it off. According to him, modesty was a part of the religion. In the matter of religion, however, he would at once point out if anybody was wrong. At the death of his son, Ibrahim, there was a complete solar eclipse, which the credulous among the Muslims took as a sign of heavenly mourning. The Prophet did not like this superstitious idea. Forthwith he delivered a sermon, explaining that an eclipse had nothing to do with the birth or death of anyone.

The Prophet was tender-hearted and affectionate. His heart ached within him at the corrupt state of his fellow-beings. The Holy Qurán testifies to it when it

[1] 33 : 53.

says: "Perhaps thou wouldst kill thyself with grief because they do not believe."[1] He took great interest in the welfare of his followers. He would ever pray for them and even portrayed the misfortunes that were to befall them in later days, and gave them consolation under these calamities. If once he received any favour at the hands of anyone, he would ever thereafter remember it. Out of regard for the memory of Khadija, he would ever sent presents to her lady friends. When a deputation from the Negus of Abyssinia called at Medina, he in person attended to their comfort. His companions offered themselves for every kind of service, but he said he loved to serve them with his own hands, for they had given shelter to his exiled friends. When the daughter of Hatim Tai was taken prisoner among others, he said that the daughter of such a generous man should not remain a prisoner and consequently the whole lot of prisoners was released for her sake.

He would show consideration both to the old and to the young. He would get up on the appearance of his foster-mother and foster-sister, and spread his own mantle for them to sit on. He had equal respect for his own daughter. "Respect your children," was one of his numerous teachings. He enjoined great respect for motherhood. "Paradise lies at the feet of mothers," he would say.

Humble and meek in the highest degree, he had the courage of the bravest of men. Never for one moment did he harbour any fear of his enemies. Even when plots to take his life were being hatched in Mecca, he would fearlessly move about, day and night. He told all his companions to emigrate from Mecca, but he him-

[1] 26 : 3.

self stayed there among his enemies almost alone. When the pursuers, following up the track, arrived at the very mouth of the cave, even then fear was unknown to his heart. "Do not be grieved," he consoled his friend. On the field of Uhud, when the whole of his army fell into a sort of trap, he shouted aloud, regardless of all danger to his own person, to rally the confused soldiers. On another occasion, when the Muslim rank and file took to flight, he advanced alone towards the enemy, calling aloud, "I am the Messenger of the Lord." When a raid was one night suspected, he was the first to reconnoitre the outskirts of Medina, riding his horse without saddling it. On a certain journey, while resting under a tree all alone, an enemy happened to come upon him. Unsheathing his sword, he shouted at him "Who can save you now from my hands?" Not daunted in the least, he replied "God." And strange to say, his enemy's sword fell down from his hand. Taking up the same sword, the Prophet put him the same question, on which he assumed a tone of abject humility. The Prophet, however, let him go.

The biographies of the Prophet written by friends and foes, are all at one in their admiration for his unflinching fortitude and unswerving steadfastness under the most trying calamities. Despair and despondency were unknown to him. Hemmed in, as he was, on all sides by a gloomy prospect and opposition, his faith in the ultimate triumph of Truth was never for one moment shaken. The most furious storm of hardships failed to move him an inch from his post. He would make the best of all available God-given means, and then leave the rest to His grace. Unexpected turns of fortune could

not depress or damp his spirits. After the terrible disaster at Uhud, the very next day he was again up in pursuit of the enemy. In a word, under the most adverse and trying circumstances, his heart was ever aglow with the firm conviction that Truth must triumph in the long run.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE PROPHET'S DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS AS A REFORMER

"And We have not sent thee but a Mercy to all the Nations."
(The Holy Qurán, XXI, 107.)

EVER since the dawn of human life, this planet has been visited by prophets and reformers in different ages and at different places. The last of them was the holy Prophet Muhammad, may the peace and blessings of God be upon him! We should like to mention some of the most important points which distinguish his dispensation. First of all comes the amazing success he achieved in his mission, which is admitted on all hands, by friend and foe alike. A single sentence in the Encyclopaedia Brittanica, 11th ed., under its article on the Koran is sufficient to establish the truth of this statement: "Of all the religious personalities of the world, Muhammad was the most successful." Never did a reformer find his people sunk so low as the Arabs were at the time of the Prophet's advent. They were equally ignorant of the true principles of religion, politics and social life. They had no great art or science to boast of, nor had they any intercourse with the rest of the world. National solidarity was a thing unknown to them, each tribe forming an independent unity was at daggers drawn with the other. Judaism had done its level best for their reformation, but to no avail. Christianity had also failed in similar at-

tempts. Hanifism, which had risen in a feeble wave, failed like the preceding movements, and died out without leaving any impress on Arab society. It was for the regeneration of such a lost people that the Holy Prophet was raised. In the course of a few years he swept away the long-standing religious, moral and social corruptions, and metamorphosed, so to speak, the very soil of Arabia. Debased forms of idolatry and superstitions were replaced by the purest Unitarianism. The self-same semi-barbarous children of the desert were imbued with a new fervour for the cause of Truth, which carried them far and wide to the distant corners of the world, to deliver the message of the Lord. In respect of Divine worship, they excelled the greatest of ascetics and hermits, without renouncing the world. In the midst of their busy everyday life, no sooner did the call to prayer fall upon their ears, than they would leave off their worldly concerns, and fall prostrate in humble submission before the Lord. Their nights were also mostly spent in Allah's worship. Thus, despite their being in this world, they were not of this world, and consequently their devotions to God were attended with a living conviction hardly ever experienced by a recluse in his hermitage.

Whereas such was the spiritual elevation to which they attained, their temporal achievements were no less grand. They won a foremost position among the mighty conquerors of the world. Great empires melted away like snow before them. They did not only subjugate vast territories, but also developed a statecraft which preserved their strength for twelve long centuries, notwithstanding the negligence of the later generations. In

brief, they were the most devoted of Divine worshippers as well as the most successful conquerors. But hand in hand with their achievements in these two directions, they cultivated various branches of science which enlightened the whole of the world, then enshrouded in utter darkness. And what is still more surprising, all this was accomplished within a score of years. It is thus obvious that the Prophet's teachings were all-comprehensive, and were calculated to bring about all-round development of man's faculties. There is no human ailment but they offer a cure for it. Just as the greatest physician is not the one who claims to be so, but the one who cures the most obstinate diseases in the greatest number of cases; similarly, the greatest of reformers is not the one who might claim to be so, but the one who should bring about the greatest amount of reformation. And this is the criterion which raises the Holy Prophet very high in the estimation of thoughtful people.

The second point which marks him out among the great spiritual reformers and prophets of the world, relates to the universality of his message. Every prophet had his message confined to a particular people. Every prophet came with light and guidance but for the benefit of a particular nation or country. Purification of human soul was, no doubt, the mission of each, but the mission was always limited. But the Prophet's message was cosmopolitan, his light universal, and the sphere of his sympathies co-extensive with humanity. "And We have not sent thee but as a mercy for mankind;"[1] "Surely We have sent thee for the whole of mankind;"[2] "That he may be a

[1] 21 : 107. [2] 34 : 28.

warner to mankind;"[1] "Say, O ye people! surely I am a messenger from the Lord towards all of you,"[2] are a few of the numerous verses of the Holy Qurán, which speak of the Prophet being commissioned for the uplifting of the entire human race. Again, the Book speaks of itself as "a reminder to all the nations."[3]

There was a time when humanity was partitioned into numerous water-tight compartments, so to speak. Every nation shut up within the four walls of its own particular homeland, lived in entire isolation from another. The means of communication were limited. Under such conditions of life no great expansion of mentality could be expected. The outlook of each was limited to its own immediate environments. Their own part of the race was all-in-all to every people. Thus Divine Wisdom could not but commission separate reformers to each people, adapted to their particular needs and conditions. These various prophets played their specified role—the vivification of a particular nationality. But like the field of their mission, their spiritual force was also limited in its range. The flare kept on for a period of time but grew gradually dimmer and dimmer, till it was ultimately extinguished altogether. Then would arise the need for another spiritual luminary to illumine the dark age, and hence the succession of reformer after reformer. But whereas Divine Providence thus provided for the spiritual welfare of man by raising prophets from time to time among various people, this led to a baneful impression. Each nation, ignorant of similar Divine favours shown to others, began to think that only they were the chosen ones of God. This fostered the mischievous idea of

[1] 25 : 1. [2] 7 : 158. [3] 12 : 104.

Divine favouritism, with a host of concomitant evils. To correct this sense of racial distinction, to remove prejudices created by geographical, social and other artificial barriers, and to weld humanity into one compact whole, Divine Purpose decreed to commission a World-Prophet, with a message for the whole of the human race. And just as his spiritual force knew no bounds, it was likewise to be above all time limits—it was to maintain its efficacy for all time to come. Consequently when the chain of denominational prophets came to an end with its last link, Jesus, who was sent, to use his own words, "for the lost sheep of the Israelites," the time was ripe for the Sun of spirituality to dawn on the religious horizon, to illuminate the whole world. "The Mercy for the Nations"[1] made his appearance and emancipated humanity from the shackles of ignorance, superstition, and corruption. The previous prophets resembled so many Divine lamps with light just enough for this or that room, and hence the necessity of different lamps corresponding to the numerous geographical and national spheres. They shed their lustre all around and everything within their range became radiant. But when the Sun arose from the sands of Arabia, these lamps automatically ceased to be in demand. But the light of the sun can not be supplanted by any other light, and is sufficient to illumine the world till its end.

It is a matter of common experience that no kind of progress in any walk of life is possible unless there is a set object, a definite ideal before us, to inspire us to self-exertion. Every previous prophet had the good of his particular people at heart, which was the specific mission

[1] 21 : 10.

of his life. If, following their example, the Holy Prophet Muhammad had also the welfare of Arabia as the only goal of his life, he would have defeated the very purpose for which he was raised. He was to remove all these national and geographical prejudices, to lay the foundation of a Universal Religion, and weld the multitudinous communities into one homogeneous whole—a Universal Brotherhood of Man. Previous religions strove to unite individuals into communities—in itself a great service—but Islam, the Religion of Nature, has come to amalgamate these petty nationalities into one Vast Brotherhood. Hence while the numerous prophets before the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad addressed themselves to the creation of this or that denomination, to his lot fell the proud privilege of cementing these heterogeneous congeries of human beings into One Harmonious Fraternity. Thus the third of the Prophet's distinctions consists in the fact that while others came to teach the secret of national unity and progress, he expounded the grand truth of the fundamental oneness of the whole of the human race and chalked out all the highways and bye-ways along which lies the prosperity, not of this or that nation, but of the whole of the human race.

Again, the mission of each one of the preceding prophets was limited to the cultivation of a particular phase of human character. Thus, the life of each presents a model in this or that branch of human morals. But the Prophet came to develop human nature in its entirety, and to bring out and cultivate each one of its numerous faculties. In his own life, every phase of human morals found a thorough manifestation. He was, there-

fore, a Perfect Exemplar for humanity. In connection with the Mosaic dispensation, prophet after prophet makes his appearance, but each one serves as a model in a particular line. But the Holy Prophet Muhammad, all by himself, combines in his person, in a much higher degree, the collective virtues of all the Israelite prophets, —the manliness of Moses, the tender-heartedness of Aaron, the generalship of Joshua, the patience of Job, the daring of David, the grandeur of Solomon, the simplicity of John and the humility of Jesus. The first link of the Israelite chain of prophets—Moses—was the embodiment of power and glory and the last—Jesus—that of humility and meekness, but the Prophet gave expression to both of these phases in his own person. Thus every spiritual luminary sent forth but one ray, a beam of light in one particular direction, but the Prophet was the centre from which went forth rays of light in every direction, and this is the fourth characteristic.

Fifthly, while the achievements of every great man are limited to a definite sphere, those of the Prophet cover the whole field of human conditions. If, for instance, greatness consists in the reformation of a degraded people, who can have a greater claim to greatness than the one who uplifted a nation, sunk low as the Arabs were, and made them the torch-bearers of civilization and learning? If greatness lies in unifying the discordant elements of society into a harmonious whole, who can have a better title to the distinction than the one who welded together a people like the Arabs, rent into warring tribes with blood-feuds extending over generations? Like the sands of their desert, the Arabs lay scattered when the Prophet appeared, and he cemented

them into a solid whole, endoved with the strenght of defying the most forcible of shocks. If greatness consists in establishing the kingdom of God on earth, even then the Prophet stands unrivalled. He wiped idolatry and polytheism off the face of Arabia and illumined it with Divine light. If it lies in displaying high morals, who can be a match for one admitted by friend and foe as *al-Amin,* the Trustworthy? If in conquest is to be found the greatness of a man, surely history cannot point to the like of the Prophet, who rose from a helpless orphan to a mighty conqueror and king, nay, who founded a great empire that, has withstood all these thirteen centuries the united world-attempts at its destruction. If the living driving force that a leader commands is the criterion of greatness, the Prophet's name even to-day exerts a magic charm over four hundred million souls spread all over the world, whom it binds together in a strong chord of fraternity, irrespective of caste, colour or clime.

The sixth distinguishing feature of the Prophet lies in the fact that he was not the product of his environments. As a matter of course, it is the prevailing state of society that gives birth to its own great man. For instance, whenever there is a general yearning among a people after metaphysical truth, a philosopher is bound to arise. If there is a passion for conquest, the birth of a conqueror is inevitable. Likewise moral teachers, poets, sculptors, in a word eminent men in various branches, spring up from the very atmosphere of the society in which there is a general demand for the particular accomplishment. Such leaders of men only embody in themselves the very spirit that permeates the age. In other words, they arise, so to speak, in the ordinary course of evolu-

tion. But the Prophet stood for what was in diametrical opposition to the then state of Arab society. He had to carry on his mission in the very teeth of the prevailing notions. Idolatry, and polytheism were the order of the day; but even as early as the age of sixteen, the Prophet had an abhorrence of idols. Superstition was keeping out the light of reason, and society was consequently enshrouded in thick layers of ignorance. Could such an atmosphere give birth to a philosophic mind such as the Prophet had? All over Arabia, individuals took pride in revolting against their tribes while the latter in their turn abhorred the idea of a central authority. Under such circumstances, the appearance of one who should uphold the principle of harmony and unity could not be expected in the ordinary course of events. Drinking, gambling, adultery were their common pastimes. Infanticide was also in vogue among them, and women were treated as chattel. Such conditions could not of themselves create a moral tower and an emancipator of woman. The fact is that the same Divine hand that prepares a pure gem in the darkest depths of the deep, had created and fostered this Light under its direct influence, to penetrate such thick clouds of all-round corruption and illumine every spot on the earth.

The last and the greatest distinction the Prophet enjoys is the fact that he laid the foundation of a universal peace. He not only taught how one individual could live at peace with another, but also how different families and tribes of the human race could live in peace and harmony with each other, and to crown all, what nobody in the world had even attempted, how peace could be brought about among the contending religions of the world. The

greatest of mankind as he admittedly was, he yet looked upon himself just as an ordinary member of mankind in general; "Surely I am a man like yourselves."[1] Man and woman, master and servant, king and subject all have their mutual rights. This equality of man with man did not only form a topic for lip-sermons, but was scrupulously carried out in the every-day life. In the daily prayers, five times a day, the king and the peasant stand shoulder to shoulder, before their common Lord on High. A slave must enjoy the same civil rights as a man of high birth, to demonstrate which Zaid, a liberated slave of the Prophet, was put in authority over the proud Quraish. As regards tribal and national equality, he taught that the variety of tribes and nationalities was not meant to give one any preference over another. They were simply a means of identification. Nationality, it was taught, was no criterion of greatness; "Surely the most honourable among you is the one who is the most virtuous." But above all he brought about a reconciliation between the conflicting religions of the world, by laying it down as a fundamental principle of faith for a Muslim to believe in all the prophets of the world, to whichever people they were sent, as much as in himself. He taught, and never before him had the truth found expression through any prophet, that there is not a nation on the face of the earth but has had a Divine Messenger of its own. Profession of faith in all the religious reformers, raised from time to time, is in fact the only principle, that can perform a common meeting ground for the various religious systems of the world. Again, he taught his followers to refrain from speaking ill of even the obviously false deities of others:

[1] 14 : 11.

"Do not abuse those whom they take up as gods besides Allah."[1] This is another practical step towards creating a spirit of inter-religious goodwill and amity. And a yet more definite method of settling all religious differences was thus pointed out: "Come to an equitable proposition between us and you."[2] In other words, taking what is common to all the religions as a basis, we should proceed to raise a superstructure thereon. Thus we would be able to build up a Common Religion.

In brief, the Prophet spared no pains, to establish, on the one hand, the Unity and Glory of the Lord, and on the other, the Universal Brotherhood of Man under the Universal Providence of One God. May Allah shower His choicest blessings on him!

[1] 6 : 109. [2] 3 : 60.

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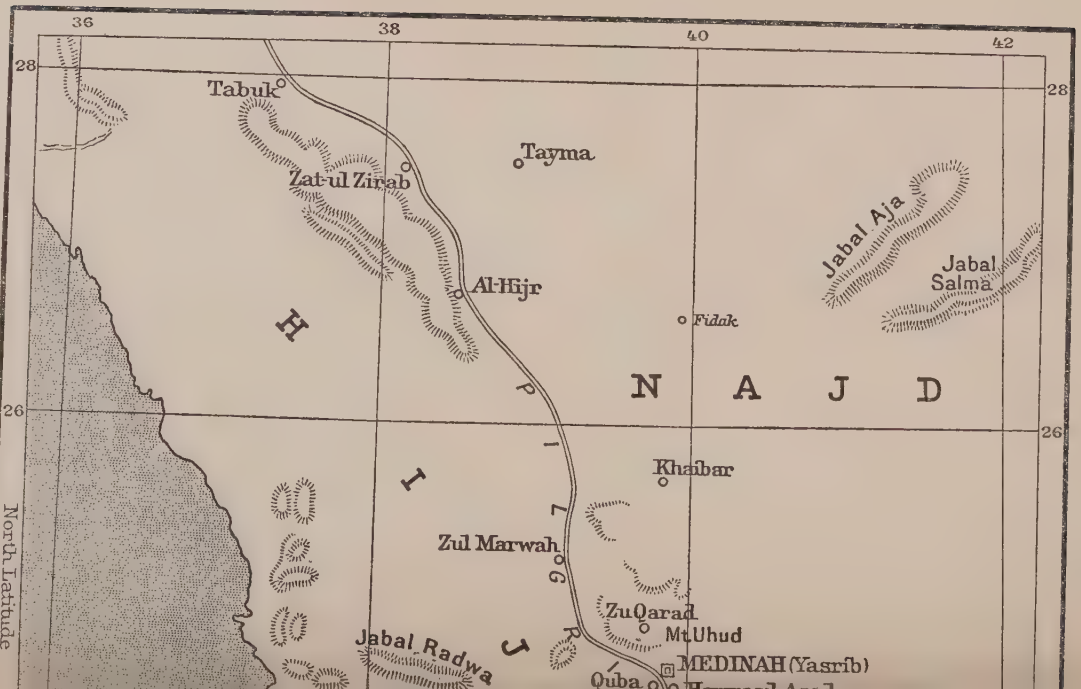
36
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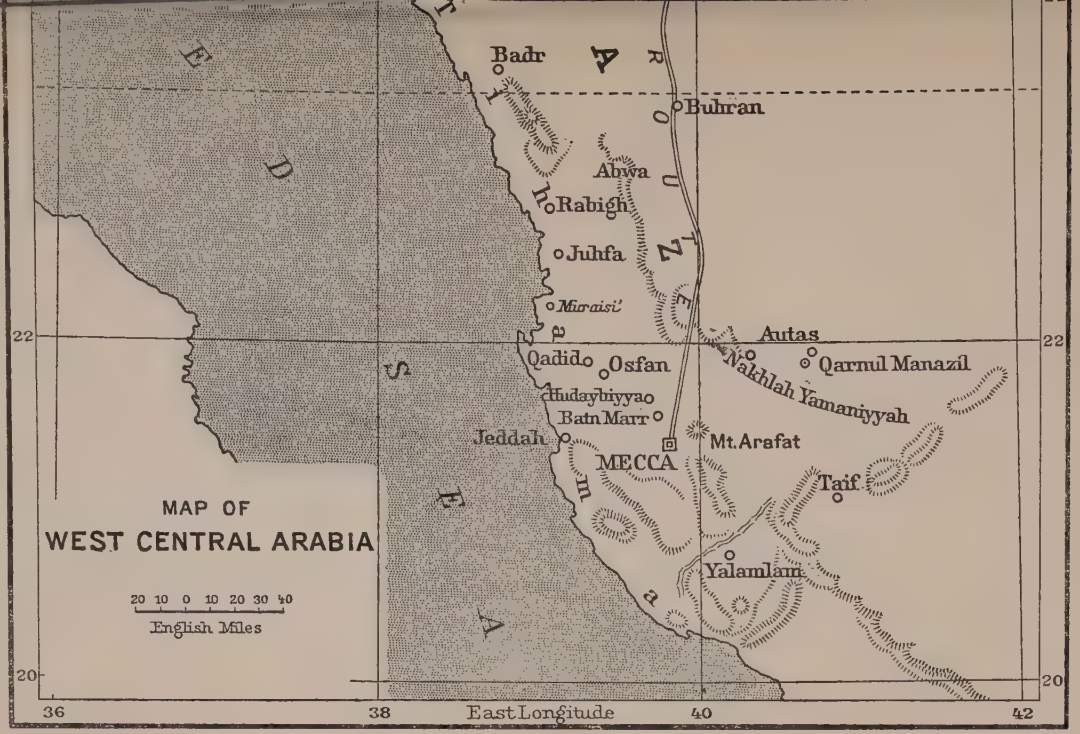
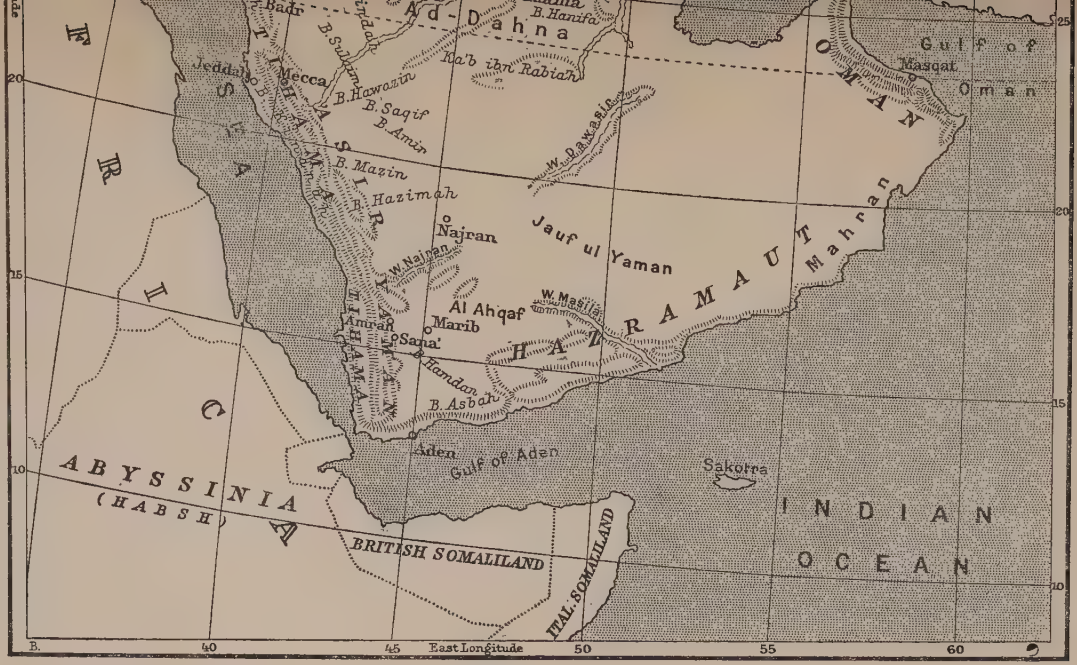
Tabuk
Tayma
Zat-ul Zirab
Al-Hijr
Fidak
Jabal Aja
Jabal Salma
H
N A J D
Khaibar
Zul Marwah
Zu Qarad
Mt. Uhud
MEDINAH (Yasrib)
Jabal Radwa
Quba
North Latitude


Badr
Buhran
Abwa
Rabigh
Juhfa
Miraisi'
Autas
Qadid
Osfan
Qarnul Manazil
Nakhlah Yamaniyyah
Hudaybiyyao
Batn Marr
Jeddah
Mt. Arafat
MECCA
Taif
Yalamlam
MAP OF
WEST CENTRAL ARABIA
20 10 0 10 20 30 40
English Miles
22
20
36
38
East Longitude
40
42

MAP
OF
JAZIRAT-UL-'ARAB
(ARABIA)
Showing location of chief tribes
and principal towns
0 50 100 200 300
English Miles
ASIA MINOR
Mediterranean Sea
Aleppo (Halb)
Beirut
Palestine
Jerusalem
DAMASCUS
SYRIA
Syrian Desert
MESOPOTAMIA
Mosul
Tigris
Euphrates
BAGHDAD
Karbala
HIRA
Iraq-i-Arab
PERSIA (IRAN)
Basra
Tih Desert
Dead Sea
Wadi Sirhan
Aqaba
Sinai
EGYPT
Tabuk
Tayma
Al Hijr
Madain Salih
HEJAZ
B. Asad
B. Khuzaimah
B. Jadila
B. Aleyan
B. Harb
B. Shammar
B. Atiyah
B. Murrah
B. Sakhr
B. Sulaim
B. Hilal
B. Uqail
B. Kilab
B. Kalb
B. Tamim
B. Rashid
B. Khalid
B. Utub
B. Ajman
B. Yam
B. Hajir
B. Ma'arrah
B. Dhubyan
B. Ghatafan
B. Fazara
B. Sa'd
B. Hamdan
B. Shahran
B. Ghamid
B. Zahran
B. Thaqif
B. Hudhail
B. Lihyan
B. Kinanah
B. Harith
B. Sulaiman
B. Hawazin
B. Nasr
B. Ka'b


Badr
B. Sulaim
B. Hanifa
Ad-Dahna
Ka'b ibn Rabiah
Jeddah
Mecca
B. Hawazin
B. Saqif
B. Amir
W. Dawasir
Gulf of Masqat
Oman
OMAN
B. Mazin
B. Hazimah
Najran
Jauf ul Yaman
Mahran
HADRAMAUT
W. Najran
W. Masila
Al Ahqaf
Marib
Amran
Sana'
Hamdan
B. Asbah
Aden
Gulf of Aden
Sakotra
INDIAN OCEAN
ABYSSINIA (HABSH)
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ITAL. SOMALILAND
RED SEA
B.
40
45
East Longitude
50
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10

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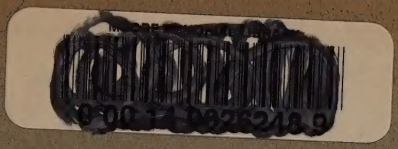

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